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THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER.

VOL. II.

THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER.

BY

ANNE BEALE,

AUTHOR OF

"FAY ARLINGTON," "THE PENNANT FAMILY,"
"SIMPLICITY AND FASCINATION,"
&c., &c.

"O my love's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June:
O my love's like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune.
As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in love am I:
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry."

BURNS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

AN INTERRUPTED WEDDING.

THE old church of Muchsandy was filled with people to witness the wedding. The Haslucks were well known in the neighbourhood, where they had held their own for some generations, and Mrs. Joe and her family were not unpopular, though Solomon was not well beloved. Mrs. Hasluck had decided that arrangements should be made with some view to fashion, she having been the daughter of a professional

man, and these culminated in a fly and pair from the "Muchsandy Arms," to convey the ladies. She had also settled that Mark's party should meet Janey's at the church door, according to the new and improved custom.

The said carriage was punctual, and had deposited the bride, her two bridesmaids—Jerusha and her elder sister—her mother, and another small sister, at the church door before eleven o'clock. The three Hasluck boys had walked from the cottage to meet them. But the gentlemen had not arrived. Mr. Gay's last words the preceding evening had been, "I shall be at the church by half-past ten to see to everything, and escort my pretty Janey, and give her away. I shall not wait for the others." But not even Mr. Gay was there, and everyone knew that he was a punctual man.

Mrs. Hasluck, therefore, took the pre-

liminaries into her own hands, and led the trembling Janey to the altar to await her bridegroom. She looked pale and pretty in her simple white wedding dress, bonnet, and veil, and was truly "a white dove." Jerusha also was becomingly attired for the occasion in silver-grey, with a touch of pink here and there, while the little girls wore white. All wedding groups are pretty, and this one, simple as it was, did not lack the usual interest; so that the spectators strained their necks to look at it, and to remark on the snowdrop of a bride and the rose of a bridesmaid. The clergyman had arrived, and all were anxiously expecting the bridegroom and his friends.

But they did not come. Janey's head drooped lower and lower, as her mother whispered to Jerusha concerning the delay, while the heads of all the other occupants of the sacred building were turned to-

wards the door, and the spectators began to gossip.

"Mark is never punctual," was Jerusha's anxious rejoinder to Mrs. Hasluck's repeated inquiries and suggestions, while she secretly held and pressed Janey's hand.

She felt how the poor child trembled as time went on, and as the clerk wandered to and from the door, repeating the words, "they must be married before twelve."

It was a gloomy day, and although there was neither rain nor sea-mist, there was no sunshine; an omen which Janey, who had been furtively consulting the heavens all the morning, had vainly striven to forget. Expectation is always trying; this was painful; and she did not dare to uplift the shy grey eyes lest they should meet wondering glances, asking her whose fault it was.

"Perhaps it was hers, and she had been too anxious for the marriage; had loved

Mark better than he loved her," she thought, as the weary minutes sped.

At last there was a movement, and a muttered "Now here they are!" at the bottom of the church. Janey's heart nearly ceased to beat, while Jerusha stood on tiptoe to see who was coming.

It was only Mr. Gay, who hurried up the aisle to join the party at the altar. He looked anxious, and held a paper in his hand.

"Mark has not yet returned," he whispered to Mrs. Hasluck and Jerusha. "We have been waiting for him. A messenger has just brought a note to bid us be at the church, and he will meet us here. But I see he has not arrived. Solomon and the others are on their way. Something must have happened, and I am afraid he will be too late."

The clergyman advanced to make in-

quiries, and Janey, who had heard the miller's whispered account, could scarcely support herself for terror. Indeed, few positions could have been more alarming.

Mr. Gay was shortly succeeded by Solomon Hasluck and two or three other friends. Solomon's face was longer and more lugubrious than usual. This was attributed to Mark's absence, since the events of the previous evening had not yet transpired; but all that long morning he had been nourishing anger against Mark as well as the other offenders, considering that his unaccountable absence proved that he had something to do with the smuggled spirits found in his waggon, and vowing that he should pay the penalty.

"The marriage had better be put off," were his words when he reached the altar, and Janey would have fainted had not Jerusha supported her.

Solomon was followed into the church by Lieutenant Firman, who had met him, and said that he would be glad of a word with him when the ceremony was over. Firman had sauntered in rather to have a look at Jerusha than to watch Mr. Hasluck, of whose appearance, when summoned, he had no fear.

Curiosity and astonishment were at their climax, and the clergyman was looking at his watch, when Mark dashed into the church. He had rather the appearance of an escaped convict than of an expectant and delighted bridegroom. His face was haggard, his clothes were in disorder. The wedding suit prepared for the occasion was still awaiting him at the Hill Farm, whither time had not allowed him to go to adorn himself therewith. But he had arrived, and the head of his cast-down bride was again upraised. He was there, and she was

happy. She did not even notice his dress for thankfulness at his presence.

"It is ten minutes to twelve. You must begin at once, sir," whispered the clerk; and the solemn service, which was to unite those two immortal souls until "death them should part," commenced.

There was an unusual hush throughout the church, as if everyone present felt the strangeness of the waiting, and the subsequent rapidity; but the clergyman's voice and manner seemed more slow and reverent than usual. He knew Janey, and augured ill from Mark's delay; but though the bridegroom's voice was hoarse and agitated, his responses were firm, and it was evident to all that his tardy appearance had not been his own fault. His pressure of Janey's hand when he took it to place the ring on her trembling finger, re-assured the gentle girl, and her "love, honour, and obey" were

clearly, if timidly enunciated, while her soul ratified the words.

The old clock in the grey church tower solemnly boomed forth the twelve strokes of noon before the service was concluded; nevertheless the ceremony was fully completed, and Mark and Janey were man and wife—two in one to all eternity; emblem of Christ's union with his Church. How few realise this when they enter upon that state instituted by the Almighty, and blessed by His Divine Son. Mark and Janey did not, though their father and Jerusha did for them. These forgot the temporary difficulty in earnest prayer for the twain who were to influence one another for good or ill, and assuredly their prayers would be answered; if not to-day, or to-morrow, still in God's good time, who bade them "pray always; pray without ceasing; knock and the door should be opened."

Mark made an attempt at explanation when the wedding-party were in the vestry, and no one doubted that he had been detained at a considerable distance by an old mate, except Mr. Solomon Hasluck, and, perhaps, Jerusha.

His story was not altogether untrue, for he had been compelled to accompany Dangerfield, in some sort as protector, to the spot where his boat lay secretly moored, and whence he was rowed to the *Sea Serpent*. Had not Mark loved Janey, and been honourable to her at least, she would not have seen him that day at the altar. He had displayed more resolution than his wily captain gave him credit for, in escaping his meshes.

His bright smile and careless manner had either returned, or he had assumed them, when he led his pale bride from the church. The day was still what the French call "a

young lady's day; with neither wind, rain, nor sun." But Janey had forgotten her longing for sunshine, in Mark, who was her sun, and once seated in the carriage, amid the huzzas of the bystanders, cared not that the day was gloomy and chill, the old church sombre, the trees clad in autumnal brown, the sands dull, the sea sullen, and the wedding-party perplexed.

Neither did her mother, as she led the way, accompanied by the miller, across fields and orchards to the Hill Farm. She had disposed of Janey, and was happy.

Jerusha stood to watch the fly and its white horses until they were out of sight, little thinking that they would pass a scene disagreeable to Mark; they drove, in fact, close to the Grange, and by Solomon's detained waggon, and Mark was painfully conscious of this, in spite of the presence of his fair young bride. As Jerusha and the chil-

dren turned from watching the fly, she was greeted by Frank Firman. He was waiting for Solomon, who remained behind ostensibly to ask his pastor to join the party at dinner, really to let the people disperse before he spoke to Firman.

"Your friend Miss Hasluck has been so good to my mother," said the lieutenant to Jerusha, "she will not allow her to leave her until her lodgings are quite ready. We owe it all to you and your father."

"Cousin Martha must have taken a fancy to you," said Jerusha, who eschewed undeserved praise. "She has her own ideas about everything."

"Even about a pretty, and I hope a happy wedding," said Firman, struck with the gravity of Jerusha's face.

Her reply was interrupted by Solomon.

"I will follow you, Jerusha," he said; and when she and the children had disap-

peared down the church path, he walked slowly after them with Firman, remarking —"A strange delay. I don't understand it. But they are married." Then he deliberately added, "Lieutenant Firman, I and my men will be ready to answer the summons. I can easily explain everything. The bailiff at the Grange must be summoned also, as he hired the waggon. Thank you for your consideration. You are in no wise to blame."

It was now Firman's turn to watch, as the tall gaunt man strode across the fields after Jerusha.

"Surely she cannot care for him! What a pretty picture she makes, surrounded by the children, and what a face she has! So changeable! An April day—from grave to gay—a sunbeam—a shadow!—now a violet, now a red, red rose. I wonder what mother will think of her?"

But she was soon out of sight, and Firman turned to graver thoughts and duties, and to the consideration of how far Mr. Solomon Hasluck was implicated in the practices of the previous night.

CHAPTER II.

THE HILL FARM.

THE Hill Farm had been arranged, rearranged, and beautified, with a view to Jerusha. Mr. Hasluck had exhausted his small talent for invention and decoration while superintending and ordering the wedding feast. The best parlour and the best bedroom were burnished up for the occasion, and all the silver tankards, salvers, spoons, and ladles of all the Haslucks were brought into the light of day. And a goodly display of solid silver it was. There was no electro-plate on table or sideboard, and, as Solomon not unjustly thought, a careful

housewife would be proud of such possessions. He had no doubt of securing Jerusha after she had seen his well-built house, handsome furniture, and plate. It must be conceded that what Solomon owned was good—solid as himself, in short—and that a thrifty maiden might have gone farther and fared worse.

When the bride and bridegroom arrived, they found blazing fires everywhere, and the feast spread in the dining-room, cake and wine in the best parlour. Mark led Janey into the latter apartment, and, after embracing her tenderly, poured out a glass of wine. His hand trembled as he did so.

"You must drink it, my darling, because I have frightened you so," he said. "But it was not my fault. For the life of me I couldn't come before."

"I would rather not drink it, Mark," replied Janey, glancing round. "How kind

Cousin Solomon has been! Did you ever see anything so grand as this room? It might have been his own wedding."

"We will have a grander by-and-by," said Mark, tossing off the wine; then, re-filling his glass, and drinking again. "I am quite done up, Janey. I have not slept all night. Stay here ten minutes while I rig myself out."

Obedient Janey sat down, while Mark hastened to change his untidy clothes for the wedding suit. Neither realised the ceremony so lately performed. Janey, on her chintz-covered sofa, glanced about her bewildered. The old-fashioned looking-glasses in their carved frames, the antique furniture, and, above all, some huge china bowls and jars of fabulous value and age, filled with branches of flowering shrubs, seemed to dance before her over-strained imagination. She was happy, but tired.

The late exciting hours had been too much for her delicate frame, and whilst striving to understand what it all meant, she burst into tears. But for those silent outlets of pent-up feelings, she would have fainted; and as it was, she was dazed by late events.

Mark, meanwhile, was almost as bewildered. While rapidly and dreamily changing his outward man into something more like a bridegroom, his inward was in a blaze of excitement. He was married, it was true; but was he out of danger of discovery? Had he been recognised the previous night? seen with Dangerfield? suspected on account of his late and disordered appearance in the church? Solomon would suspect him, if no one else did. And what could he say to him? He must avoid any private communication altogether, and let things take

their course. He and Janey must leave as soon as propriety would permit. They were to spend a brief honeymoon in Bath, where Janey had relatives, whom she had never seen, and there he should have time to think. Ah! this thought! If only he had acted from reflection instead of impulse, things might have been different, but he could never think.

Thus meditating, he quickly rejoined Janey, and saw the tears. They but completed his dissatisfaction.

"Well, Janey, you needn't begin by crying," he exclaimed. "There is nothing to fret about now we are married."

"No, indeed, Mark. And how nice you look! Quite beautiful!" she rejoined, wiping away the offending tears. "I am so happy, only I could not help crying, because I was so frightened at being in the church so long

before—before you came. I thought you were not coming at all, and was so—so miserable. What made you late?"

"I don't wonder, dear, but I couldn't help it. I am sure I was more bothered than you could have been," replied Mark, trying to find some answer to the question which should not be a falsehood.

The entrance of Jerusha delayed the necessity. She saw Janey's tears, and instantly took her from the room. The remainder of the party came in, and pressed round Mark. Comments and inquiries fell upon him, thick and fast as a plague of locusts, and he could no more attempt to parry them than a swarm of those invading insects. Solomon stood to listen, but spake never a word. The appearance of the clergyman again aided Mark, for that gentleman asked no questions. He was soon succeeded by Janey and Jerusha, the

one tearless and smiling, the other grave and silent. All turned from Mark to Janey, and kisses and congratulations took the place of curiosity, and Mark was once more free.

A substantial dinner was prepared for the guests, to which they soon adjourned. It was not, at that time, the fashion amongst the respectable yeomen or gentlemen-farmers to call that meal either by the French *déjeûner*, or its English *breakfast*, and when Mrs. Joe Hasluck alluded to it as "the wedding breakfast," Mr. Gay exclaimed that they had already breakfasted, at eight o'clock. Although the feast was on a most liberal scale, it would have been dull but for the presence of the children. Their hilarity and appetite filled up all gaps both in talking and eating, for they were indifferent to the mood of the master of the mansion.

Solomon was silent and preoccupied, even with Jerusha by his side. He had found

no opportunity of speaking to Mark alone, and had not cared to introduce the subject of his annoyance publicly.

As to Jerusha, she had never before felt so incapable of a laugh or jest. Mark was awkward, Janey shy, and Mrs. Joe occupied with the manners of her uproarious younger offspring. So it fell to the miller and the parson to speechify and propose the toasts. Of course, Mr. Gay did not forget the old saw, of "The single married, and the married happy," which caused everyone to glance from Mark and Janey to Solomon and Jerusha. This pleased Solomon so well that, in returning thanks for his health, he said, rather to the mystification of most of his guests, and glancing from Mr. Gay to Jerusha, "I haven't changed my mind." This was too comic for Jerusha, who burst out laughing, and her laugh was so bright and tuneful that everybody joined in it

without knowing why, and so made the end better than the beginning.

The end! Mark thought it would never come. They were obliged to drag through nearly three mortal hours of eating and drinking, toasting and returning thanks, and when, as was then the inebriating custom, spirits and water appeared to conclude the feast, he almost made an inward vow never to touch them again as long as he lived.

He looked involuntarily at Solomon as the "fire-water," that curse both of civilised and uncivilised life, was placed on the table, and their eyes met. The dissatisfied vividness of Mark's, and the sullen gloom of Solomon's, told that they wished the smuggled liquors at the bottom of the sea that had aided their importation. But as neither the clergyman nor Mr. Gay, the seniors present, touched them, little was consumed. It might be well if all "grave and reverend

seniors" set an equally laudable example.

During this final half-hour the ladies left the dining-room, and Janey prepared for departure.

The fly was ordered at four o'clock, and arrived punctually. Mark rose from the table to say something to the driver, and Solomon Hasluck followed him into the hall, in order to get the desired chance of speaking to him privately.

"Do you know who loaded my waggon yesterday?" he asked, laying hold of his arm.

"Your waggon? How should I? What has happened to your waggon?" returned Mark, as carelessly as he could, for he was an indifferent dissembler.

"Dangerfield's bailiff hired it, and it came back full of smuggled liquor," said Solomon.

"Then the bailiff is the man to ask, I

didn't hire the waggon. I had nothing to do with loading it."

As Mark said this, Jerusha and Janey came slowly down the stairs to his great relief. Janey was dressed for her journey, and had her arm round Jerusha's waist. Mrs. Hasluck and the little girls followed. Leave-takings soon ensued, at which no one shed tears, Janey having exhausted hers, and her mother being too well satisfied to cry. Mr. Gay was in great spirits, and bade Mark soon bring his bride back to the mill.

All the party stood under the stone portico to watch the carriage drive off, and to add a shower of old shoes to a shower of rain that was falling. The children, heedless of white frocks and new suits, ran after the shoes, halloing heartily, while their elders remained under the shelter, shouting out their adieus.

"May God bless and prosper them!"

ejaculated Mr. Gay. "May they be good and faithful to one another."

"Amen!" said Jerusha, solemnly, placing her arm within her father's, while tears filled her eyes.

"When shall we have another jolly wedding?" shouted the eldest boy, as the children scampered back. "I ate of everything on the table—goose, and pheasant, and ham, and plum-pudding, and custard, and apple-tart, and oranges, and——"

"I wish it was coming all over again," interrupted his sister. "I hope Cousin Solomon will soon marry Rushy. I know they're engaged, for they sat together."

This, uttered at the top of shrill young voices, was audible in the porch. Solomon was standing behind Jerusha, with Mrs. Joe on his right. He laid his big hand upon Rushy's shoulder, stooped over her, and whispered,

"Do you hear, Jerusha? Name the day. I'm willing and ready. Let bygones be bygones."

The unconscious miller went into the house; the rest followed; but the wooer and the wooed remained in the porch by mutual consent.

Jerusha turned calmly to Solomon, releasing herself from his grasp in so doing.

"I have had enough of weddings for one day," she said, placing her back to the doorpost to avoid further contact. "It will take me a long time to recover from this one. Do you know what took Mark away so late last night, and detained him till near noon to-day?"

"Bad company. I have always kept good company, Jerusha."

"Perhaps you have never been tempted. Where did he go?"

"To the ale-house, probably. How do you like my house, Jerusha?"

"It is handsome, but dull. You have been generous to make so grand a feast for Janey."

"It was for you, Jerusha. But you did not eat."

"Thank you, cousin; a wedding is enough to frighten away anybody's appetite. This is my first, and I hope it will be my last. Did you see Mark after he left Kimberlin Cottage?"

"Not until he came so late to church. I should be in time, Jerusha."

"You are old and steady, and should know better than to forget yourself. But Mark is carried away by tempters. Is Captain Dangerfield at home?"

"I don't know, but I must learn to-morrow, Jerusha."

This last question changed the course of

Mr. Hasluck's ideas, which were slow to turn; but once diverted from their current, they did not readily retrace their path. Fear of disgrace was stronger than love, and at the name of Dangerfield his countenance fell. Much to Jerusha's surprise and relief he walked quickly into the hall, thence to the kitchen, where he gave orders that tea and supper should succeed each other as rapidly as was polite. He wished he could curtail the festivities, but he felt that all the meals must be gone through, and the whole of his munificent hospitality accomplished. What if the summonses should arrive before his guests, and especially Jerusha, had departed?

He called in his carters, and questioned them for the hundredth time. He learnt from them that they had failed to find the Dangerfield bailiff, for whom they had been searching all the morning, and that people

were beginning to be inquisitive concerning his waggon, which had conveyed its load to the custom-house at Sandport. He would have been comparatively easy in his mind had he never purchased smuggled spirits surreptitiously, or let out his waggons and carts without inquiring their destination and purpose. He was a just and righteous man in his own estimation, and according to his own lights, but if these smaller matters led to inquiry, together with his somewhat usurious loans to Mark and Dangerfield, he felt that his reputation might suffer. He had no fear of clearing himself as regarded the waggon-load, though he was aware the penalty, if he could not, was either a hundred pounds or a twelvemonths' imprisonment. It was no great wonder, therefore, that he put no stumbling-blocks in the way of the early departure of his guests.

They had been bantering Jerusha upon her little flirtation in the porch, and the children had been pestering her with inquiries as to when they were to have another wedding. Her temper had nearly given way under these inflictions, and she felt hot and angry. The day had tried her greatly, and she longed for the soothing "click, click" of the mill, and her dear restful home. But with these longings came visions of Mark and Janey disturbing its peace, and Miss Martha offended and indignant.

"I tell you what it is, children," she cried impetuously, "if you want another wedding you must wait till you are grown up yourselves, for I never mean to go to another as long as I live."

"Don't be hasty, Jerusha," said Solomon, coming in as she spoke.

"I assure you I mean what I say, Cousin Solomon," she retorted. "I would

as soon go to a funeral. But," she added relentfully, "it is not your fault that Mark and Janey's wedding has not been merry. You have been very liberal and hospitable, and you could not have provided a better feast."

"Three cheers for Cousin Solomon!" shouted the eldest boy, while the other children took it up.

"Hip, hip, hip, hurrah! And I hope he will soon give us another wedding."

The miller, hearing the hubbub, joined the children and united in their cheer, which caused Solomon once more to glance meaningly at Rushy, and to whisper,

"You see, my dear, they all wish and expect it. You have only to name the day. I'll wager Aunt Martha will come, and I should be first in church."

Jerusha was about to escape, when she found herself imprisoned by the excited children.

"Let's have a game of 'Drop the glove,'" cried one. "Come along, Uncle Gay! Come along, Cousin Solomon!"

And, in spite of herself, Rushy was soon engaged in a romp with her new relatives, in which they were aided by her father. But she deftly avoided being trapped in the game by her slow but determined lover.

CHAPTER III.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE EYES.

MISS MARTHA was as great a riddle to herself as to anyone else. She wondered why she had invited a stranger to stay in her house when there were many of her own kith and kin who were anxiously looking for this privilege. She believed that she wanted an excuse for not attending the wedding, and had made hospitality her cat's-paw. When she examined her motives, as she sometimes did, she began to think that there was, after all, no adequate reason for her absenting herself from the marriage of her own niece. What if Mark had an eye

to her possessions? It was but natural, and if he chose to marry a goose, that was his affair, not hers. She had never felt so cross and ill at ease in her life as on the wedding-day; and she could scarcely restrain her curiosity and annoyance until Jerusha and her father returned.

But they were in no hurry to pay her a visit, for they felt aggrieved with her, and perplexed how to explain the tardy appearance of Mark at the church, a fact which was sure to transpire. What was still more of a puzzle to Miss Martha was why she had taken a fancy to Firman, who was not a nephew, when, strive as she would, she could not be fond of Solomon and her other relatives; also, why she liked Mrs. Firman at first sight, and disliked Mrs. Joe Hasluck after many years of inoffensive intimacy. She had installed Mrs. Firman in her best parlour, and best bed-room, and had given

her son Frank a general invitation to visit his mother whenever he liked, and yet found the presence of her own relations a bore. But perhaps she was not peculiar in this.

"It is because they care for what I've got, and not for me, and one can't command one's likes and dislikes," was her line of argument when she tried to read her riddle, without solving it.

Certainly no two persons could be, to all appearance, more opposite than Mrs. Firman and herself. Mrs. Firman was a quiet, pleasing, ladylike woman, of unpretending manners, and a reserve that almost reached silence. She was at least ten years younger than Miss Martha, and did not look old enough to be the mother of such a stalwart, resolute son as Frank. She was a tall, slender, drooping woman, with a pale, delicate face, soft golden hair, worn in bands beneath a simple cap, and a pair of penetrating grey-

blue eyes. Miss Martha soon discovered that, although she talked little, she thought, reflected, and read much, and that, although neither she nor her son spoke much of themselves, or their previous history, she was a lady who had seen a good deal of life. There was a repose about her that suited restless, talkative Miss Martha, and, in their cases, extremes seemed to meet.

A few days after the wedding they were seated together discussing Mrs. Firman's proposed removal to the village, when Jerusha came in. She felt that she could delay no longer, so, having made her father's tea, she paid her visit, not without some curiosity concerning Firman's mother. The ladies were seated on either side of the parlour fire when she entered, lengthening out the twilight by conversation, if talk all on one side can be so called. It was a blusterous October evening, and Jerusha's

roses were even redder than usual, and her hair and cloak slightly ruffled. The smiles and dimples had come back, for she had heard of the safe arrival of the bride and bridegroom in Bath, and was getting reconciled to the prospect of their abode in or near the mill.

"Come at last!" shouted Miss Martha. "This is Rushy, Mrs. Firman; the very worst girl in the country, as I daresay you will find out before long."

Rushy curtseyed to Mrs. Firman, who rose, and held out her hand, with a scrutinising glance at the bright, animated, pretty face, and a cold, abstracted manner.

"Miss Gay, I believe; my son has spoken of you, and of your father's kindness," she said.

Jerusha longed to reply that all obligation was on her father's side; but she could not meet apathy with warmth.

"Now take off your things, sit down on your own chair, and tell us all about the wedding," said Miss Martha. "You've been long enough in coming."

Jerusha obeyed, and seated herself between the ladies in the front of the fire, "her own chair" being the only low seat in the trim, pretty, well-furnished room. It was some little time before she found herself self-possessed, for the grey-blue eyes seemed to be looking her through and through. However, she was not naturally shy, and by degrees she answered Miss Martha's voluble questions, who had not heard any particulars as yet, and who made her comments as Jerusha told her tale, with her customary loquacity.

"Mark rather late, was he? So I expected. You'll find 'em a late couple. Solomon made such a feast as that! all on your account, you sly-boots. He won't sur-

vive it. Mrs. Joe must have been cock-a-hoop with a carriage and pair. Janey pretty! impossible. Too white to be pretty. White cats with pink eyes good for nothing. Bad mousers that never get a living. Well, they're married; and what does your father mean to do with 'em, I wonder?"

"He is going to repair the old dairy-house, and add two rooms to the pine end," said Rushy, as soberly as she could.

Miss Martha uplifted her hands, and exclaimed,

"What a man! He don't know what to do with his money! Is Janey to be dairy-maid?"

Jerusha laughed heartily at the notion, and said she feared the butter would never be churned, or the cows milked.

"Hers the wedding, yours the work," said Miss Martha, just as there was a knock

at the front door, and Rushy was in the act of rising to leave.

"It is Frank," said Mrs. Firman, who had not spoken before, but had sat listening, with her eyes on Jerusha, and her mind, it would seem, elsewhere.

She rose, almost as if she were a youthful bride about to welcome her bridegroom, and hurried into the passage. The embrace of the mother and son was visible from within, and Rushy's heart beat quick as Miss Martha said—

"A good young man that, without any nonsense. Not like Solomon, always preaching."

Jerusha had put on her bonnet and cloak by the time they came together into the parlour.

"You are leaving just as I come, Miss Gay," said Firman; "you must let me see you home."

"Not on any account. I am out and about at all hours, and no one thinks of escorting me," replied Jerusha, who felt that Mrs. Firman's glance was on her, and who had not decided what her scrutiny meant, or if she had been thinking of her at all.

But the lieutenant was not to be prevented, and accompanied Jerusha, evidently to his mother's chagrin.

"Is that a miller's daughter?" asked Mrs. Firman, when they were gone.

"Yes; my Cousin Gay's only daughter, as clever and good-looking a girl as there is anywhere," replied Miss Martha, bristling at the question.

"Really!" ejaculated Mrs. Firman, carelessly.

The October moon was at her full as Firman and Jerusha walked towards the mill. She was half hidden behind a bank of clouds as they set out, but sailed forth in

all her glory just as they reached the stream. They saw Miss Martha's sheep folded beneath her bed-room window at the side of the house, and her geese plattering in the brook. The latter were making a great noise, even for them—for geese like to make themselves heard—and were flapping their wings, spreading out their white breasts, and uplifting their heads beneath the moon, like young ladies in a ball-room by gaslight.

"Why do they screech so?" asked Firman.

"They are probably calling for an absent friend," replied Jerusha. "Animals always know if there is a stray amongst the flock. The geese are taking their bath before retiring for the night, and seeing that they are all at home."

In effect a solitary goose appeared in the distance, and the flock, with a simultaneous cry, left the stream, joined the wanderer,

and waddled slowly, and in pairs, like a long wedding procession, back to their nightly abode.

Frank and Jerusha stood to watch them for a moment, then crossed the rustic bridge, the moon shining above them in the sublime depths of ether. The rippling water, the murmuring sedges, the fields, trees, hills, and ocean gleamed beneath her beams, and all nature seemed at peace. It was a night for lovers, and almost without knowing it, the pair who stole silently along, as if to prolong the moments, were lovers. They had met frequently, and under peculiar circumstances, and now the moonlight, the solitude, the suppressed hush laid bare the secret of the heart to each, though neither spoke of love. Firman dared not, for he was poor; Jerusha could not, for she was a woman—yet sometimes heart speaks to heart, when words must not be spoken;

and so it was now. The eyes that met beneath the moon were transparent as her truthful rays, and their gleaming light flashed from soul to soul; yet there was no pressure of hands, no love-scene, no tears —only hope.

For when Firman spoke at last, it was of Mark.

"When your brother returns," he said, with some hesitation, "will you advise him to be careful to have no dealings with Captain Dangerfield. I feel that I can speak to you as a personal friend, as well as to one interested—a friend who will not misunderstand me. And I think you misdoubt Captain Dangerfield."

"I do not like him. He does Mark no good," replied Jerusha, transported from sentiment to reality. "Have you any reason for warning us against him? Anything I could safely tell my brother?"

"It behoves all men to be cautious in word and deed, and none more than those in my position," said Firman, ambiguously. "But your father is so good, your brother really brave and generous, and you—well, you—are Jerusha," he added, with another look into her bright eyes, "so that I cannot forbear saying these few words, which are, perhaps, more than I am justified in saying."

"Thank you," murmured Jerusha, joy quickening her heart, in spite of sisterly anxiety.

As they neared the mill, Mr. Gay came out hastily, with a newspaper in his hand. Recognising Firman, he said he was the very man he wanted to see, and insisted on his coming in, though Firman said he had not much time to spare, and had scarcely seen his mother. The miller had been reading the account of the seizure of Solo-

mon Hasluck's waggon, and was carrying the Sandport paper containing it to the villa.

"Is this all true?" he asked, spreading the journal on the table, and pointing to the paragraph, which Frank had not seen.

It detailed the capture of the smuggled goods, the shots fired at the Preventive men, their resolute conduct under Lieutenant Firman, the proximity of Dangerfield Grange, and, finally, the ownership of the waggon and carters. It proceeded to say that summonses had been issued against Mr. Hasluck of the Hill Farm, to whom the waggon belonged, as well as against his carters, and the bailiff of Dangerfield Grange, who had hired the waggon. It then continued to recount that the bailiff had disappeared, and that the law had taken its course as regarded Mr. Hasluck, though it

was generally believed that he had been a mere tool in the hands of the contraband traders. The magistrates had fined him one hundred pounds, and in default of payment a twelvemonth's imprisonment. The carters had been let off. Mr. Hasluck had at once paid the fine, under protest, and had been advised to be sure of his man before he let out his vehicles in future. The article ended by praising the cool and considerate conduct of the young officer in charge, who had not been many months in the county.

Having glanced through it, Firman said it was mainly correct, and that he was the officer.

"That was the night before Mark's wedding," said the miller, rubbing his ear in his perplexity. "I am sorry for Solomon, and wonder how he got through the day. I didn't know the law was so hard on an

honest man; for he's honest, if a trifle near. I suppose Harding, the so-called bailiff, has been burning his fingers, and the penalty has fallen on the wrong man."

Jerusha glanced at Firman, but his countenance was illegible. Her mind went at once to Dangerfield, and she understood the warning she had just received to refer in some mysterious way to him.

"It is hard," continued the miller, "that a young fellow like you, sir, should have the power of hauling up a respectable man such as Cousin Solomon."

"I only did my duty," said Firman. "I am not in the coastguard by choice, but necessity."

"True, true. I won't malign the law. But Solomon no more helped to smuggle those liquors than I did. Rushy, we must be kind to him when he comes next. He's

been hardly dealt with, and made a scapegoat of. No wonder he was so grim at the wedding."

"It *is* hard," said Firman, thoughtfully. "It seemed hard to me, as a boy, for the one scapegoat singled out from his fellows to be sent into the wilderness to die, bearing the sins of the people."

"Stop, young sir!" cried Mr. Gay, fixing his eyes suddenly on Firman. "There you have the secret of our redemption. One man to die for the people, *The* man, Christ Jesus."

Firman bent his head in reverent assent.

"I understand it now, sir, and, I hope, realise that One final sacrifice," he said.

"Then I ask your prayers for my only son, that he, too, may be brought to under-

stand the price paid for him," said the miller.

And again Firman and Jerusha's eyes met.

CHAPTER IV.

CLEARING OF THE DAIRY-HOUSE.

DURING the succeeding ten days there was so much to do in the way of preparation that Jerusha had not time to think over the past. Still Mark was continually in her thoughts, as well as Firman's warning concerning Dangerfield. Her father had evidently no suspicion of either. He was, indeed, of too unsuspicious a nature to misdoubt anyone, until proofs were before him. He hoped and believed that Mark was about to turn into a steady married man, and took his measures accordingly, without counting costs.

Although not what is called a rich man, he had saved money, and was making an excellent annual income. He might have been very rich but for being able to say, "A tenth of my goods I give to the poor." As it was, however, he considered that he could not better invest a portion of his savings than by providing a suitable abode for his son. He was rather too fond of brick and mortar, and Jerusha trembled when she saw all the masons and carpenters in the neighbourhood gathered together to turn what was familiarly known as the old dairy-house into a home for Mark.

This so-called dairy-house was near the mill—back to back with it, so to say—being only separated from it by two large yards, which half surrounded each dwelling, by a pathway, and a row of tall elms. But the dairy-house stood higher than the mill, being built on the cliff. Its front over-

looked the sea, as well as a rocky road leading to Beachton. It had been used as a storehouse since Jerusha's small dairy had been transferred to her own particular domain.

Jerusha was present when orders were given to clear it of all the sacks of flour and odds and ends that filled it, and she noticed displeasure on Levi's stolid features, while the other men glanced from him to one another expressively. She supposed that they did not like the trouble of conveying the heavy sacks from the dairy-house to the lofts above the mill, and suggested that they should have help; but they negatived this at once with unusual decision.

"I will zee to it, measter. I bean't a sluck-a-bed, and will do 't avore yo' be oop," said Levi. "Measter Mark mun 'ave his way, an' a house vor pretty Miss Janey."

In her heart Jerusha was delighted that

her brother and Janey should have a separate establishment, and not live entirely with her and her father.

The night after the order was given to clear out the dairy-house she was aroused from sleep by some unusual noise. She listened, but there was no repetition of it. Since Mark's marriage she had been restless, and was always imagining unforeseen difficulties, so she jumped out of bed. She felt sure she heard a splash in the mill-pond, and wondered what could be disturbing her swans. She opened her window gently, but the night was too dark to distinguish objects. There was another plash, as of a body falling into the water, succeeded, at intervals, by more.

"What if some one is being drowned," she thought, shuddering. "They say that years ago a woman drowned her child in the mill-pond."

She put her head out of the window to look and listen, but could see nothing save the indistinct out-buildings, and hear only the murmur of the sea. She was about to call her father, when she fancied she heard whispering voices. She sharpened her hearing to its acutest point, and felt sure that people were stirring about the dairy-house. At last she was satisfied that Levi's voice reached her in the words—"It be all flump in now," as the water plashed again.

"Is that you, Levi Tuck?" she cried, as loudly as she could. "What are you about at this time of night? Not drowning yourself, I hope."

A footstep sounded beneath her window. Brave as she really was, she withdrew her head.

"Husht, miss; we be only a clearin' the dairy-'ouse vor measter to begin to pull

'un down avore Measter Mark do coome huome," said Levi, in a low voice.

"Who have you got with you? How can you manage in the dark?" she asked. "Father will not approve."

"Brother Job and Chivers have come vor to help. Measter have ordered the miasons to-morrow, an' it bean't ready vor 'em."

"What did you throw into the mill-pond?"

"Nowt but rubbishy dirt, an' a dead cat, as wur jammed."

"All in the dark! How could you tell?"

"Lor', miss, we've got lanterns vor to zee, and we zhall a' done a zight o' work avore the morn'ng to zurprise measter."

"You're wonderfully on the alert, Levi Tuck," said Jerusha, closing her window, and remembering his proposal to prepare

the dairy-house against the workmen arrived, to which her father had assented.

He was certainly on the alert. In obtuse natures cunning supplies the place of talent. There were other stores than wheat, bran, and flour in the old dwelling, and more men than Levi mentioned helping to dispose of them—stores that neither the miller nor Mark knew of, and men they were not in the habit of employing. Jerusha's voice, however, had stayed the work, whatever it was, and the swans were no longer disturbed in their nests on the mill-pond; but, had her bodily senses been as acute as her mental powers, she would not have again retired to rest that night. As it was, however, she slept peacefully till the twittering birds awakened her with the dawn, and she prepared, cheerfully as they, for the day's work.

"Levi and the rest of 'em have done a

fine morning's work," laughed the miller, when he came in to breakfast. "The old place is nearly cleared, and there is nothing to do but to carry the sacks up to the mill-lofts and begin the repairs. I ordered the workmen to be here before noon, and they might have been here now."

"I think it *was* a good night's work, father," said Jerusha, recounting her experiences. "I hope Levi won't take it into his head to clear us out next."

"Well, I am glad to see the dairy-house empty once more. Come and have a look at it," returned the miller. "It is many a year since we have been over it together."

They went accordingly as soon as breakfast was finished. They crossed the neat walled court that separated their dwelling-house from the mill at the back, and went through a gate on the left that opened upon the road to Beachton. This road lay con-

cealed between hill and cliff, so that it was not visible from the mill, and was the way of approach for vehicles. Pedestrians usually chose that by the hill and fields. Then turning into the elm-walk they stood between the two yards, and watched Levi and some other men busily stowing away the heavy sacks of wheat and flour which had been removed from the dairy-house, into the lofts above the mill. The wheel was hard at work, and all seemed to tell of honest industry. Jerusha nodded, and spoke cheerfully to the people who surrounded the open doors of the mill, then crossed the second yard to the back-door, also open, of the dairy-house. Her father remained a moment to speak to Levi, and she encountered a man bearing the last sack of flour from house to mill. It was Job Tuck.

"You must be sleepy to-day, Job, after

last night's work," she said, as she passed him.

"I be used to keep my eyes uopen vor the vish, Miss Rushy," he replied. "Measter Gay a' let me vinish the work, vor the vish be shy just now."

"That is more than you are, Job Tuck," thought Rushy, walking into the empty dairy-house. "Ah, how lovely!" she exclaimed, going straight through it to the front door, and pausing there awhile.

She saw a grand view of the sea and opposite coast, for, as we have said, this house stood higher and much nearer the cliffs than the mill-house. Jerusha scarcely remembered to have seen the door open before. It and the front windows had been hermetically sealed ever since her mother's death. During that mother's life she had kept a dairyman and his wife in the house, to superintend her large dairy; but when

she passed away from her husband and her young children, Mr. Gay gave up the dairy, keeping only a couple of cows for his own use. The house, having subsequently been turned into a receptacle not only for sacks but lumber, all sorts of iron utensils and odds and ends lay about the doors, and Rushy was astonished at the *omnium gatherum.*

She soon went from room to room, forcing open the rusty, dirty, broken windows, and letting in the air, until her father joined her.

"This reminds me of your dear mother," he said, with a sigh. "Her dairy was her pride; but she is in a better land now, where, in God's good time, I hope to meet her again.

"Yet this is a very beautiful and happy land, father," said Rushy; "and I am surprised at this pretty house. I think Mark

and Janey will be lucky, and ought to be very happy."

The miller's countenance brightened.

"Thee are not jealous then, after all, my lass," he said, putting his arm round her neck. "I feared thee wast aggrieved to have Mark and Janey here."

"I was, father, because you and I have been so happy together, and I dread interruptions and come-betweens; but I hope I have quite got over my little naughtiness, and long to have them settled here," replied Jerusha.

"Rather than in your best parlour, Rushy," said the miller, playfully.

"Yes, father; I like you all to myself," she answered, standing on tiptoe to kiss his kindly handsome face, and being received into his arms.

Then they went through the house, which was capable of being converted into a good

liveable abode, and finally settled "parlour and kitchen and hall."

The bells of Woolleysheepfold rang a merry peal when Mark brought home his bride. Had he been a king he could scarcely have been better received, for all turned out of their houses to watch for the fly that was to convey them from Sandport. As to Beachton, it was all alive with expectation, and the green path from the main road to the front of the mill was full of people. No sooner did the fly appear than a shout arose from labourers and fishermen, their wives and children, and as Mark and Janey were bowled over the sward and across the ford, they had every reason to rejoice that they bore the respected name of Gay. Doubtless they both made many good resolutions.

The miller and Jerusha were in the porch to receive them, and the welcome home

was genial and hearty. It seemed as if hand-shakes and embraces could never cease. Janey clung about Rushy, and Mark held his father's hand with an affection that was not forced or unnatural.

"My turn now, Janey," said the miller.

"And mine, Rushy," cried Mark.

The pale young bride turned shyly to her father, and was folded in his kindly arms, while Jerusha put hers round Mark, and burst into tears.

"Rushy!" ejaculated Mark. "It's unlucky to cry."

"I—I—can't help it. I am so glad you are safe back!" she stammered, hugging him the closer, as the tears fell faster.

"Why, did you think we should be lost?" laughed Mark. "Or that the new railway wasn't safe?"

"Now make haste, or they'll all be here," cried Mr. Gay. "Put on your best toggery,

Janey, for we've asked Cousin Martha, and Captain Bowles, and young Firman, and lots more to the wedding supper, and they're all coming. Madam Firman declined, but Cousin Martha says she is delicate. They're as thick as inkle-weavers; thicker than you and Aunt Martha, my pretty Janey. Why, bless the lass, art trembling like the mill-pond rushes?"

"Is aunt *sure* to come?" asked Janey, and they were the first words she had spoken.

"I think she had better keep her distance," said Mark, sulkily. "She's a jealous old cat."

"We asked Solomon, but he declined, and we were only too proud when Cousin Martha accepted," said Mr. Gay. "We wanted Solomon to bring over your mother and the youngsters, Janey, but he has been a good deal cut up of late, so we didn't

press the matter. He can't get over the loss of his money and good name."

While Mr. Gay explained to Mark what he knew already relating to Solomon's misfortunes, Jerusha took Janey to her room, and was repaid for her labour and anxiety by her innocent delight.

"Dear Rushy, you are all so kind!" said the fair young bride, "and I am so happy. Mark is, oh, so very good to me, and I love him better every day!" She hid her blushing face on Jerusha's shoulder; then she raised it timidly again, and added, "If you will teach me, dear, I will try to be a good and useful woman like you, and then perhaps Aunt Martha may think better of me, and Mark may forgive her for not being at the wedding. He is very angry now."

"All was for the best, Janey," said Jerusha, remembering with sorrow the bridegroom's late appearance on that in-

auspicious morn. "I am sure Cousin Martha will be very kind to you both if you do not seem to have taken offence. She is quick, but forgiving, and I don't think anyone could be angry with you long."

"I hope not, dear, and indeed I will do my best," said pretty Janey.

CHAPTER V.

THE DANGEROUS PASSION.

"DO you leave me for this village festival, my dear Frank?" asked Mrs. Firman of her son on the evening of Mark and Janey's return.

"I have promised to accompany Miss Martha, mother," was the reply, "and Mr. Gay has particularly invited me."

"You stayed longer than you intended the other evening. Is the miller's daughter so great an attraction? I see so little of you that I cannot help feeling jealous, and you know I am here solely on your account."

Mrs. Firman was knitting some delicately-coloured wools into baby's socks as she spoke. She glanced up at her son, whose brows contracted slightly, and whose voice was firm, as he replied,

"Yes, mother, she is an attraction. As I told you by letter, when I mentioned Mr. Gay's hospitable intentions towards you, I find her the brightest, sweetest, most innocent, and yet the most sensible girl I ever saw. Far beyond most young ladies."

"Enough, enough, Frank!" said Mrs. Firman, with a slight shrug of the shoulders, and an almost imperceptible expression of displeasure. "I fear you are in love at last. But have you considered that a miller —well—a miller is, at best—a miller—a sort of superior wholesale seller of flour. We are poor, but we are at least gentlefolks."

Frank smiled as he laid his hand on his mother's shoulder.

"That is all the difference, mother," he said. "You see, it is in degree, not kind. Your wholesale man is the merchant, your retail the tradesman. I wonder which my mother is in the sale of those pretty socks she is knitting?"

"Neither, Frank. You know that a friend disposes of them for me," replied Mrs. Firman, colouring slightly. "I assure you many ladies do the same."

"No offence, mother. I acknowledge the ladyhood in you, and Jerusha. But is it impossible to admire, or even to love, without the vulgar tax of questions and jests? I do not mean yours, for you have the right, but such as vex one when anything beyond pleasant intercourse is impossible. May one not admire purity and

good-nature, without being expected to marry them? May I not see Miss Gay without being in love with her?"

"The question is difficult, Frank. Young people sometimes get unconsciously entangled. The miller's daughter may be all you think her, yet not a suitable wife for a gentleman. I trust you will look higher."

"Wife, mother! As if I could ever marry! Thanks to your perseverance, I got into the navy; thanks to the cessation of the war, I was drafted into the coastguard. I wish I was on shipboard again."

"Oh, Frank! And you accepted the change to help me!" interrupted Mrs. Firman. "Your prize-money is already more than your pay, and I seem to see my way to respectable lodgings, thanks to you. But you know that you are all I have, and all I love in this world!"

"All right, mother. I am not likely to

marry, and if you are happy I am contented," said Firman, cheerfully; "but you must try not to 'feed my flame' by talking of Jerusha. You know opposition is a fan to love."

Mrs. Firman knew that her son was a man of decision, and had no intention of overtly opposing him. Still she feared that, once really attached to a girl, it might be for ever. Setting aside such inequality of position as might exist between him and Jerusha, she was mainly dependent on him herself. She had sacrificed her small income to make a gentleman of him, and place and maintain him in the royal navy, and now she had scarcely any personal property. She was either too delicate or too proud to seek employment publicly, and the sale of such fancy articles as she could manufacture privately was precarious, and brought her in, at best, but a few annual pounds. Her

love for her son was absorbing, and he returned it; but she was jealous of any rival, while he was thankful that she should find friends. Having been separated from him while he was on board ship, it was now her object to be near him. Indeed she had for many years changed her abode to such ports as he was likely to visit. She would really have preferred residing with him at Muchsandy, but this appeared to him impossible. However, as Beachton was within his rounds, she was happy to be at the villa, and dreaded the time when she must move to more inland Woolleysheepfold.

She liked Miss Martha, and accepted her hospitality as it was meant, making daily protestations concerning immediate removal; but she was not well, and good-hearted Miss Martha would not hear of a change until a certain cough and debility had been re-

lieved and strengthened by daily draughts of fresh milk, containing "just a table-spoonful" of that questionable rum which she paraded before the lieutenant as "the best and cheapest ever bought."

When Miss Martha came in with her walking things on, she gave peremptory orders concerning Mrs. Firman's supper, and told Frank that they should be late for theirs, if they did not make haste.

"Then I shall not see you again to-night, Frank," said Mrs. Firman, rising to embrace her son.

"You two are like lovers, billing and cooing," said Miss Martha, "we shall have enough of that to-night unless the turtles are tired already, as I expect."

When she and Frank set out for the mill, he took the opportunity of thanking her for her kindness to his mother, and begging her not to inconvenience herself by detaining her

any longer, as good lodgings were to be procured.

"Never put myself to inconvenience for anybody. If I can accommodate a friend or neighbour by pleasing myself I am glad to do it. Now, your mother just suits me, because she keeps my parlour aired, and never interferes with any other part of the house. Let her stay till I'm tired of her, like a sensible young man, or till she's tired of me, which is more probable. Between you and me and the gate-post she wants care and a little feedin' up. That's what I'm used to. Famous for my plump poultry, and not in bad condition myself."

"But, Miss Hasluck, we are strangers, and do not like to intrude," began Firman, which caused Miss Martha to walk so fast that further conversation was impossible.

They were both breathless when they reached the mill.

"Never saw such a young man in my life," she cried, as Jerusha came to receive her bonnet and cloak. "He's nearly walked me off my legs."

In spite of himself, Frank's manner was influenced by his mother's warning, and his greeting of Jerusha was less eager than usual, though he thought he had never seen anyone look so charming. She was dressed in the silver-grey silk of the wedding, with the pink adornments, and Janey had tied up her "bonny brown hair," not with "a bunch of blue ribbon," but pink.

As to Janey, she was more of a snowdrop than ever in her white dress, worn at the request of Mark, who was proud of his slender, lady-like bride. They were seated nigh each other when Miss Martha rustled into the cheerful room.

Captain Bowles was there also, and Mr. Manners (Mr. Worthington's curate), and a

few other friends of no moment to this story. The large parlour, with its pictures, gilded books, and old china, looked cheerful and handsome in the light of a blazing fire and plenty of candles; and Mr. Gay looked as cheerful and handsome as they.

He greeted Miss Martha and Firman heartily. The former was magnificent in some rich brocade, and a cap with even larger wings than usual. She wore a massive gold chain, to which hung her gold repeater, visible to all the company, and she appeared, what she was, a well-to-do and important dame.

She walked straight to Janey, who rose to meet her, with a shrinking, backward glance at Mark, who also rose, and stood by her protectingly, his handsome face defiant; while large, round, portly Captain Bowles moved uneasily, as he also got up from his chair.

"Bless me! one would think I was a bristling porcupine," exclaimed Miss Martha, looking from one to the other. "Never could understand why Shakspeare called him *fretful*. Porcupines don't fret, for they've the best of it, though I daresay the vermin they eat fret—black beetles, and the like. And I don't fret, for I've the best of it—unmarried women have, cap'en, whatever you may choose to say. I take it you're all offended with me because I don't countenance matrimony. 'Let those that hatch hive,' say I. If I don't choose to marry myself, I see no reason why I should abet the geese that do. Wish you joy all the same, Mark and Janey. And now that's over. No, Janey, never kiss before folk."

So saying Miss Martha patted her niece on the shoulder, and looked her over with an emphatic "humph! you're fine enough, anyhow."

Jancy drew back, and Mark appeared more like a bristling porcupine than Miss Martha.

The wedding-feast was laid in the hall, and was a triumph of Jerusha's housekeeping and management. All adjourned to it at once. It was not the fashion at Beachton to separate man and wife, so Mark and Jancy led the way, and occupied the posts of honour side by side. It was customary in that primitive hamlet, at harvest-homes and other festivities, for married couples to dance and sit together a whole evening; and, as a rule, they did not tire of one another. Mark knew, therefore, when he married, what would be expected of him, and that he must not grow weary of Janey.

In spite of Miss Martha's strong-minded opinions, she was placed between Mr. Gay and Captain Bowles at supper, while Jeru-

sha, who headed her table, had the lieutenant on her left and the curate on her right.

It was a merry meal, and everyone's bristles were drawn in. Mark was the gayest of the party, and Janey laughed at all his jests. Had Mrs. Firman seen Jerusha she must have agreed with her son in his opinion of her, for never did dainty dame do the honours more gracefully. Her dimples were in full play, and she had an answer ready for every compliment. But Firman did not compliment, though he was continually thinking that she was superior, not inferior to himself, as his mother would have it.

Mr. Gay had not forgotten his more indigent neighbours, but had provided a feast in the kitchen as well, so that the wedding, so inauspiciously begun, might be blessed by the prayers of the poor.

"You will go and see my mother when she is alone, Miss Gay?" said Firman, resolved to bring them together. "She will be solitary in a lodging."

"Certainly, if she would like to see me," replied Jerusha. "But Cousin Martha says she dislikes company, and she did not accept our invitation to-day."

"You have not paid me a visit yet," interrupted Captain Bowles, addressing Firman. "Old men go for nothing, eh, Miss Martha, when a lady's in the way?"

"They don't think so, anyhow. The humbler they seem the vainer they are," returned the enemy.

"And the plainer," suggested the miller.

"Fiddledeedee. Age mellows. Old cider's good as champagne," said Miss Martha.

"We had champagne at Bath," whispered Janey.

"And lots of other good things," ex-

claimed Mark. "Why, Janey's uncle could buy up Beachton."

He looked defiantly at Miss Martha.

"Then why didn't you and Janey sell yourselves?" she asked. "Maybe, the uncle would have given a trifle for you."

"They gave us the right of purchase," put in Jerusha. "We cannot do without them here."

Janey and Eirman gave her an approving glance.

The supper lasted a long time, and when it was over, and many good wishes had been spoken, Mark made a speech which delighted his kind father, the gist of which was that he hoped to settle down at Beachton for the remainder of his life, and be a useful member of society. But even while he gave out this sentiment his eyes were roving, as if typical of his unstable mind. He repeated it, however, in the kitchen,

whither he and Janey went, and was much cheered. But even there his previous life followed him in the persons of Levi and Job Tuck, and other of his former accomplices. Still he meant what he said, and we must hope he will adhere to it.

The evening ended in the parlour, with songs and mirthful games. Jerusha sang a south country ballad, Firman a sailor's love ditty; and, in spite of the lonely lady at the villa, the "dangerous passion" sank deeper and deeper into the hearts of these young people.

CHAPTER VI.

"TU-WHIT, TU-WHOO."

IT was natural and proper that Miss Martha should also give a party in honour of the marriage, and, although she pooh-poohed what she called "the proprieties" in a general way, on this occasion she humoured them. Hers was a dinner-party, and she was resolved to show Mrs. Firman what she was capable of in that line. She had already discovered the pride that lurked beneath her guest's apparent humility, and that she objected to her son's visits to the mill. She, therefore, lost no opportunity of pouring into that lady's ear stories

of the miller's wealth and importance. She assured her that he was not only a man of substance but influence, and that he had received a good education. She told her that Jerusha's mother had been a governess in Squire Worthington's family, and that she had instructed her daughter herself until her death, which happened when Jerusha was twelve years of age. She descanted on her favourite's cleverness, love of reading, appreciation of Nature, and, above all, her excellent disposition and warmth of heart. In short, she overstepped her mark, and aroused rather than allayed Mrs. Firman's fears; for if all this were true, it was still more likely that she should lose Frank, and thus be thrice widowed—for she had been twice married. Not that Mrs. Firman told Miss Martha this. She was, on the contrary, so reticent that her hostess knew no more of her history when she had

been a month in her house than when she entered it. Nevertheless, she had been blessed with two husbands, and Frank was the offspring of the second marriage. What was more remarkable still, Frank had never heard of the first marriage. Mrs. Firman was that miracle in woman, one who could keep her own secrets. Were there more such there would be less scandal in the world; though she was, perhaps, a shade too reserved for her son's happiness.

Mr. and Mrs. Worthington honoured Miss Martha's dinner with their rectorial presence, together with the friends who were at Mr. Gay's supper; and it was this genteel addition to the company, and a desire to see Captain Bowles, which induced Mrs. Firman to consent to be the tenth at table. She considered that a rector who was a magistrate and a squire's brother dignified any company; so she put on her best gown

and cap, and made her first public appearance.

Miss Martha's parties were always pleasant and natural, because Miss Martha was always herself. She was just as loud and out-spoken before the rector as before his clerk, and equally respected by both. She could give a good dinner without attempting to be fashionable, and Mr. Worthington and his excellent wife were not in the habit of criticising their parishioners. They loved the text, "Use hospitality one towards another without grudging," and dispensed and partook of it readily. Russian dinners were not introduced at that time, so Miss Martha had the comfort of carving her own food, and seeing her table groan beneath it. She did not know that it was economical to have your viands carved for you, or elegant to look at your dessert while your servants ministered to your guests. But she was

proud of being able to cut up a bird without removing her fork from its breast-bone, and liked to see her shining mahogany cleared for dessert.

Mrs. Firman was surprised to remark how well everything went off. Those who speak little observe more. She was seated at dinner next Mr. Worthington, and noticed that he was interested in all that concerned his flock, and spoke much of the young people present. He said that they could not get on without Jerusha in the parish, and that he hoped her delicate-looking sister-in-law would prove as useful as she. He trusted Mrs. Firman would help Mrs. Worthington in the schools and clubs when settled at Woolleysheepfold, and that they might improve her son's acquaintance, who was, he remarked, "Very reverent in church, and, he understood, a good officer."

You may be sure Mrs. Firman watched

Frank narrowly, much to his discomfort; but she fancied he had a rival in Mr. Manners, who was very attentive to Jerusha, and whose means of supporting a wife were somewhat inferior to her son's. She was inclined to consider Janey more lady-like, if less sensible, than Jerusha, though she was obliged to allow that Jerusha, with her sparkling eyes, merry dimples, white teeth, and clear, roseate complexion, was very pretty indeed, and very becomingly dressed. She sighed as she made these observations, and turned her attention on Captain Bowles, who, of all the party, excited her curiosity most. He, like Frank, felt that "her eye was upon him," and once asked Miss Martha why "that lackadaisical lodger of hers was casting sheep's eyes at him."

"Because you're so good-looking, cap'en," replied Miss Martha, at the top of her voice. "The women can't let you alone."

In the course of the evening the Captain and Mrs. Firman found themselves side by side. The lady had manœuvred it, quite unsuspected by him or the others, and he began to think he was really an object of attraction to the ladies.

"I used to know some people of your name," she said, with her quiet, impenetrable manner. "Had you ever any relations in the north?"

"Never had any relations at all to the best of my knowledge," replied the Captain, bluffly. "I am south country. Not a soul of my name left that I know of. Your son asked me the same question. What Bowles' were yours, ma'am?"

"Well, I can't say exactly what they were. Gentlefolks, of course. I met them some years ago."

"Then, ma'am, I am sorry to say I can't own 'em, or they me. Nothing gentle

about me, or any of my people that I remember. Indeed, since you seem to have your reasons for asking, I may as well quiet 'em by stating that I'm American, and that's more than is known in these parts, so maybe you'll keep the secret."

"Certainly," replied Mrs. Firman, bowing. "I merely inquired because the name was familiar to me, and is not a common name."

"We're descended from Tom Bowler, ma'am; only some fool turned the r into an s. I'm proud of my ancestor. Your name is more uncommon still. Never met a Firman before in my life, though I've had one in my pocket. Haw! haw! governors used to give them to us sometimes when we were in Asia. It means a passport, or a sort of license, you know, useful enough when one's in foreign parts."

"So I have been told. We think it

originated in firm—man," returned Mrs. Firman, coolly.

"Shouldn't wonder, ma'am. Surnames are as eccentric as their bearers. Don't understand people's pride about 'em. I know a man that boasts of being a Mr. Eve—one of the Eves of some abbey as old as creation; and another who thinks Mr. Adam vulgar, and is about to add an ap to it, to show his descent from a Welsh king. Now, Jerusha, there, may be proud of her name, for she has a king for a son."

"That is an old joke, Captain Bowles," cried Rushy, laughing. "Mine is a Bible name, Mrs. Firman, and, unfortunately for me, Jerusha was the mother of King Joram, only she spelt her name with an h at the end."

"It was the Christian name of my mother and grandmother," remarked Mr. Gay, "and I find it neither too old nor too young."

"I like it! I love it!" whispered Frank

to Jerusha, and no king's mother ever looked fairer than she in the flush kindled by her woman's pride at those few words, spoken by a poor coastguardsman.

Scarcely were they uttered before a summons came for the speaker. Firman had left orders with some of his men, stationed at no great distance, to call him if necessary. He apologised to Miss Martha for leaving the room, and when he returned said he must apologise again for quitting her pleasant party, but his presence was required on duty. Mark started up, and asked eagerly what was the matter.

"Some smuggling business, I fancy," returned Firman.

"Have you seen Solomon Hasluck since he got involved?" asked Mark. "How did he take his shameful sentence?"

"He has scarcely noticed me since, and looks gloomy and resentful," replied Firman.

"Shameful sentence, Mark!" cried Captain Bowles. "What do you mean, sir? It was simply law and justice."

"Without mercy," muttered Mark, between his teeth.

When Firman pressed Jerusha's hand, he whispered that he was grieved to leave her. He had all a sailor's warmth, with a landsman's prudence.

"It is very dark and cold, I wish you were not going," she said.

His mother accompanied him to the door, for that parting kiss without which he never left her, and he sallied forth into the damp November night.

When he was gone Mark went up to Janey, who was sitting meekly in Rushy's low chair near the fire. The cold always tried her, and she felt it the more on account of the white dress, even though Miss Martha's room was warm. He sat down

on the end of the sofa at the back of her chair, and she glanced up at him with a gratified smile, as if he were still her lover, which indeed he was.

"You won't mind my slipping away for a few minutes after we get home, darling," he whispered. "I want to see Lieutenant Firman about Cousin Solomon, if possible. I know where they are stationed, and it won't take long. I couldn't say what I wanted in public, because Cousin Martha is so outspoken."

"You are sure it will be only a few minutes?" asked Janey. "I am afraid at night, and there is an owl that hoots near our window. You will not be angry, Mark, but I tremble so when I hear it by myself. It is a bad omen, and it terrifies me."

Mark laughed as he stooped to touch her fair white neck with his lips. Since her marriage the ringlets had been tied up in a

bunch, and fell, after the fashion of a statue, over the back of her head.

"No billing and cooing in company," said Miss Martha, in a low voice for once. "I suspect all public demonstrations. Kiss before folk, scratch in private, is my experience of married people."

"But not likely to be mine, Cousin Martha," returned Mark gaily. "Your experience is second-hand, and not worth much."

Here Mr. and Mrs. Worthington came to take leave, and to thank Miss Martha for their agreeable evening. Mrs. Worthington had been particularly kind in her manner to Janey, and had told her that she hoped soon to see her at the rectory, which had been pleasant to Mark. She repeated her invitation to him, for she and her husband were in the habit of entertaining the inmates of the mill and villa from time to time.

When they were gone, the rest of the party drew round the fire for a chat. Captain Bowles was irresistibly attracted towards Mrs. Firman, in spite of his seeming resolution to repel her, because she had known people of his name. He was remarkably inquisitive, and thought he might suck out her secrets while keeping his own. But he was mistaken. They were both playing the same game, and no checkmate took place that evening. Each was too wary to give the other an advance beyond the first moves. The Bowles and Firmans must have been unknown to one another, since they had been apparently divided all their lives by the Atlantic Ocean. Still the representatives of the names considered one another with curiosity and interest, and continued their cautious game all the evening.

"I'm jealous!" said Miss Martha to Mr. Gay.

"That's a good sign, Aunt," whispered Janey, with unusual animation. "I used to be jealous before——" she paused and looked down.

"I suppose the gentility all said *ornt* in *Borth*," supplied Miss Martha.

"Oh, yes! But I do not wish to say it," replied meek Janey. "I try to avoid it because you dislike it."

"A penny for your thoughts, Rushy. I never saw you in a brown study before," shouted Miss Martha.

"They're not worth it, for I was thinking of you," returned the ready Jerusha, using proverb for proverb, and telling a fib, for she was thinking of the lieutenant, and those tell-tale words of his.

Mr. Gay broke up the party at two o'clock, with *his* favourite proverb of "early to bed," and they were soon on their homeward way. The miller and Jerusha pre-

ceded, arm-in-arm, the former carrying a lantern, for it was a dark night. Mark and Janey followed.

"Are you quite sure you will not be long, and must you go out again to-night?" asked Janey, clinging to her beloved as if afraid to lose him.

"Just for a few minutes, on particular business, my darling," replied Mark, slipping his arm round her waist, and so convincing her of the necessity.

Accordingly, when all was silent at the mill, and its inmates in their first sleep, Mark left Janey alone in her chamber at the pine end of the house. He had insisted on her going to bed, promising to return in a quarter of an hour. Indeed, he was only going to the old dairy-house, where Job Tuck had appointed to meet him, just before he went to the villa. He had heard nothing of the proceedings of the

smugglers during his absence or since his return, and had, indeed, evaded his old companions. But Job had been persistent, saying that he had something important to communicate that very night, and Mark had promised to meet him.

So Janey was left alone in that ivy-covered pine end to listen for the "tu-whit, tu-whoo" of the dreaded but innocent night-owl, Mark having asked her to abstain from mentioning his intended absence to anyone, and having again promised to return to her almost immediately. Nobody so ready as he to make promises, and nobody so ready to break them.

CHAPTER VII.

JANEY'S GHOST.

JERUSHA had been unusually wakeful since the night when Levi and his friends cleared out the dairy-house. Those plashings in the mill-pond had made her strangely suspicious, and she had walked daily round it with an impression that something more than mere rubbish lay at its bottom. However, the waters had been sullen and dull as the November days, and had given no symptoms of having received into their depths anything unusual. It was not surprising that she should be wakeful after her return from the dinner-party at the villa.

Firman's few but emphatic words had entered her heart, and with the mystic power which such words possess, even when meaningless, of throwing the feelings into confusion, contrived to banish sleep. Jerusha was generally rapid in action, and not given to linger over her work or thoughts; but on that night she sat some time before she began to undress. Unlike Janey, she never felt the cold—that warm loving heart of hers keeping her so active for others that she had not time to feel it. Now it was pulsating rapidly, with a new devotion. Those unwary words—"I like it! I love it!" what did they mean? The language was strong to use for a mere name, and *Jerusha*, she thought, was more odd than pretty; indeed, she had sometimes wished she had been given another. Did they convey a deeper meaning? Did the young coastguardsman like her as well as she liked

him? Did he,—not even of her own heart, beating so strangely, could she ask the question—did he love her? Still it haunted and troubled her. She thought over every word he had ever spoken to her, but none had been so forcible as those three little monosyllables—"I love it!" "It!" How silly she was! "It" was only the neuter gender after all. The pronoun put in place of Jerusha, a name, not Jerusha a person. Had he said *you* or *her*, there might have been some sense in sitting there with her elbow on her dressing-table, immersed in spelling over and over a word of two letters. She would no longer be so foolish; she would not indulge such silly thoughts.

She jumped up, with a sort of irritation, and, as she did so, saw her face in her looking-glass. It was Firman's "red, red rose." She contemplated her own reflection a mo-

ment, and a shy but slightly coquettish smile answered it, and was again responded to.

"Jerusha, are you not ashamed of yourself?" she exclaimed, suddenly turning the swing-glass, so that its back should be towards her. "Vain of two peonies of cheeks, and a pair of eyes too bright to be modest. Janey never looked so! No wonder he was bold enough to say 'I love it.' I shall not speak to him again."

She tore hastily a bunch of red berries from her hair, gathered and placed there by Janey, and went to her small book-shelf. Taking down her Bible, and a volume of extracts from Jeremy Taylor and other divines, of which she was fond, she began resolutely to read. Both books had belonged to her mother, and were marked here and there. She came upon the following passage by Jeremy Taylor:—"As, by fre-

quent playing upon an instrument, a man gets a habit of playing, so he does by repeating the actions of the same sin ; there is an evil quality produced, which affects and corrupts the soul."

"That is why my dear mother used to tell us to shun every temptation to sin," she said. "How I wish she were here to counsel me, and--and—Mark. And there is Thomas Fudgit striking midnight."

She started up again, and was just beginning to undress when she fancied she heard a footstep beneath her window. She listened a moment, then opened her casement and looked out.

"Is that you again, Levi Tuck?" she asked, perceiving the shadowy figure of a man not far off.

"No, it is I, Frank Firman," was the whispered reply.

She was about to re-close the window,

when Firman came rapidly towards it. She paused, lattice in hand, as he addressed her, in spite of her late resolve.

"Don't be frightened, Miss Gay. My men and I are on the watch for a gang of smugglers, said to be in hiding amongst the cliffs. I hope I have not alarmed you, or roused you from sleep."

"No. But are you sure of your own way this dark night? The cliffs are dangerous."

"They are marked at the worst places, and we shall have the moon by-and-by. Good night. You are sure you are not frightened?"

"Quite. Are your men near you?"

"They are not far off. Again good night. Happy dreams and slumbers light."

Jerusha was conscious that he raised his cap, and lingered a moment beneath her window, as she also lingered, gazing out

into the dark when he was gone. All her good resolutions fled, and her heart beat tumultuously again, She had read of serenades, and that they were ditties sung by lovers in the *sere*, or evenings, beneath their lady's casement; surely hers had been a strange serenade. Yet it was pleasant, and she felt that Firman confided in her. But what of the smugglers, and how had they managed to come so near Beachton? This thought recalled Solomon, and with him the eve of the wedding, and Mark's sudden disappearance. Vainly trying to disentwine the web in which her mind was entangled she undressed, knelt in prayer for herself and all she loved, and at last went to bed and fell into disturbed sleep.

Firman and his men were watching meanwhile. A small craft which did not belong to Beachton had been seen to put in there that afternoon. The coastguard

had been on the alert, but there was no symptom of her containing anything but coal. She had put in to stop a leak, and had created a sensation in the hamlet, as she was a larger vessel than was usually seen in the little harbour. A short while before Firman was called away from the villa, his men had watched some doubtful-looking sailors walk up the cart-road at the back of the mill. They had naturally lost sight of them in the obscurity, but had taken measures to intercept them from above. They had, however, seen no more of them, and it was their disappearance where there was but the one direct road that had induced them to summon the lieutenant. He had been long assured that there was a hiding-place somewhere between Beachton and Sandport, but his attention had been diverted from Hollow Cove by the apparent poverty and dulness of the fishermen living

there, and by the disappearance of the *Sea Serpent* from the vicinity. *The Invincible* had also withdrawn, and was waiting to pounce upon the illicit trader nearer Much-sandy.

The smugglers were cunning enough, and knew all this. They managed to deceive and evade preventive men and revenue cruisers; but they found an opponent as keen-witted as themselves in Lieutenant Firman. It was marvellous what ingenuity, watching, and counter-watching, time, rest, money, life even, were sacrificed in maintaining and suppressing an illegal traffic. Over two millions was paid by Government —in other words, by the British people—in the year of which we write, to put it down, and paid in taxes, probably by the very men who lost their wits over the smuggled drink they purchased. How hard we often

work to save a halfpenny by paying a penny!

Firman perambulated the mill, accompanied by two of his men who knew the locality. It was the opinion of the men that the sailors were lurking about the mill, in hiding from the coastguard. But there was no sign of them. Everything was tranquil, and, save the few words he had interchanged with Jerusha, Firman heard no sounds but those of night and nature. Poor Janey's dreaded owl hooted, and the winds and waves united in a melancholy moaning, while a withered leaf or so touched his cap as he paraded beneath the trees; otherwise, all was silent. He walked round the partly-dismantled dairy-house, while the moon was meditating an appearance behind Golden Cap; perambulated the mill and its out-buildings; made the circuit

of the dwelling-house, garden, and orchard; still there was no adverse sound. Peace seemed to hover over the abode of Jerusha, and his heart seemed to hover there also.

He finally left it, however, and as the moon rose over the hill, shrouded by mists and clouds, he and his men walked towards Hollow Cove, in search of the smugglers.

We must return to Janey, whom we left trembling alone in her ivied chamber.

She was always timid and nervous, and Mark's absence made her trebly so. It was not that she misdoubted him, for she had entire faith in him; but she feared some evil. She feared to be alone in the dark, and had a strange, nervous terror of ghosts. Her naturally weak, simple mind had never been strengthened by healthy teaching, and darkness made her shudder with an incomprehensible dread of she knew not what. The hooting of the owl intensified this, and

as she lay alone in the somewhat remote and solitary guest-chamber, she felt neither alive nor dead from horror at what she counted next to death, darkness. She covered her head with the bed-clothes, and tried to sleep. In vain. She listened for Mark, but he did not come. She grew stone cold for very fright, and really believed she should die of it.

Some hours went by in this way, until, with a great effort, she uncovered her head. A gleam of light, which terrified her almost more than the darkness, lay on the floor. It was but a moonbeam stealing tenderly into her room, and flickering up her bed, and over her white face. When at last she became conscious of this, she made an effort to rise, and finally got out of bed. She could bear the terror and solitude no longer, and, in spite of Mark's prohibition, resolved to seek Jerusha.

She opened her door noiselessly, and went out into the passage that separated her room from the other bed-rooms. She stole down to Jerusha's door, passing Mr. Gay's, and stood there some minutes in the moonlight, hesitating, and holding the handle in her hand. At last she took courage to turn it noiselessly, and went in.

Jerusha was asleep, her rosy cheek contrasting with her white pillow, and a smile dimpling her mouth. She was repeating over in her dreams those three monosyllables she had been meditating upon when waking.

Pale, scared Janey stood beside her in the wavering moonlight, which glinted in from the open door. She had not the heart to arouse her, and, as her terror diminished with the consciousness of life near at hand, Mark's desire that she should not name his absence from the house returned in its force,

and therewith that word "obey," which had troubled her in the marriage service, so lately said for and by herself. She was by nature obedient, made so, perhaps, more by fear of the consequences of opposition than by principle, so she stood trembling by Jerusha's bedside without awaking her, looking more like a ghost than a human being.

There was a creak in the passage outside, which she imagined to be Mark's footstep. Jerusha was aroused by it, and opened her eyes just as Janey moved to leave the room. Jerusha was conscious of a white figure at her bedside, which turned as her eyes unclosed, and glided rapidly through the door, that she had supposed shut. She was courageous, and did not believe that the spirits of the departed walked the earth; still she was troubled at so strange an apparition. She got up, and struck a light.

Janey had re-fastened the door after her, so she felt sure that no one could have entered or disappeared in the usual way. The window was also closed and bolted. She had no belief in spiritualism as a science; indeed, had never heard of it; but she knew something of a disordered imagination. She again took herself to task for thinking silly earthly thoughts the last thing at night, against which her father had often warned her; and tried to persuade herself that the figure she had so distinctly seen was an hallucination. Still it rested on her mind, and, in spite of her prayers for repose of spirit, and her endeavours to repeat the hymns she loved, poor Janey's troubled visit caused her much doubt and perturbation, and banished "tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," from her eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RAKINGS OF THE MOON.

WHEN Mark left Janey he stole quietly out of the back-door, and crossed the two courts to the dairy-house. He glanced as uneasily about him as if he had been a felon, instead of heir of the land he trod. The back-door of the dairy-house was cautiously opened for him by Job Tuck, and locked after him. Was he a prisoner in his own future dwelling? He scarcely knew, for he was, as yet, unaware of what awaited him. He had learnt since his return home that during his illness, and subsequent absences from the mill, Captain

Dangerfield had declared himself his representative; but he had not yet heard what he had done in that capacity. Job, Levi, and the rest of the Beachton folk who were in the secrets, supposed, naturally, that Mark was kept informed of all that passed, which had not been the case; and they had acted blindly and submissively at the Captain's bidding, or at that of such substitutes as he might send, who were even more reckless than himself.

Mark found himself in one of the empty rooms of the dairy-house, surrounded or confronted by a number of sailors and fishermen, with some of whom he was unacquainted. The strangers were all smugglers, of the daring, cunning sort to which Mark had been accustomed; the rest were the fishermen from Beachton and Seagull's Nest, and such of the mill folk as had joined in the trade. As the window of the

room was carefully shuttered and barred, there was a dim lantern, with a rushlight in it, which just served to keep the room and its inmates from utter darkness.

When Mark had examined the room as well as the obscurity would permit, he nodded to the men, and asked what they were after at that hour and on his father's premises.

"The rakings of the moon," replied two or three, with a laugh.

"Not up aloft here?" said Mark, making an effort to join in it. "You'll find no rakings here."

"The mill-pond, Measter Mark, as you do know," said Levi.

"But I don't know," exclaimed Mark.

They all looked surprised.

"The kags as was drowed in when the diairy-house wor cleared, Measter Mark, avore you coome huome," explained Levi.

"Twor a giame o' bline-buck-o'-Diavy, vor we wor vorced to clean 'un out in the dark. Miss Rooshy anigh vound us out; she be zo zharp as a needle wi' half a dozen eyes."

Levi laughed at the recollection of his own cleverness, while Mark looked puzzled and angry.

"What does he mean?" he asked, looking from one to another. "I have heard nothing of all this."

Mark learned by degrees the facts of the case, and they were very disagreeable to him. Dangerfield had discovered that Hollow Cove had become a spot suspected by the coastguard and cruisers, because Firman occasionally was seen on the cliffs, and the *Invincible* on the sea, near it. He had taken advantage of Mark's indisposition to order the contents of the cave to be secretly transported to the mill, and concealed among the sacks and rubbish of the dark

dairy-house. As Levi had access to it at all times, this was not difficult. Hither had been brought also smuggled goods from a distance by the fishermen living at Beachton, who contrived to ply between the *Sea Serpent*, and other smuggling vessels, and that retired hamlet, and to place their booty safely in the dairy-house. In this Job Tuck was the presiding genius; and during the months of Mark's illness and recovery, the nights had been as busy as the days at the mill.

As the front of the dairy-house faced the sea, and as the cart-road from Beachton lay below it, concealment was easy. They contrived to open one of the long-closed doors, so as to receive the goods; then, having stowed them away, to close it again, and place the sacks against it as before. No contrivances were too cunning for the smuggler, and contact with him sharpened the

wits of the peasant. Your would-be honest countryman too often becomes the tool of the designer!

"Then you threw the spirits into my father's mill-pond when he ordered this house to be cleared for me?" said Mark, wrathfully.

"Iz zure, Measter Mark," replied Levi.

"There was nothing else to be done," said Chivers; "the house was to be ready for you, sir, in a jiffy, and if Levi hadn't took out the goods in the night, and drowed the spirits into the pond, we should 'a been in a pretty pickle. I can tell 'ee, we worked hard to do it."

Mark had on his lips a curse upon Dangerfield, but he restrained it, seeing that the sailors were probably in his pay. But they and the other bystanders were keen enough to perceive that he was very angry. He turned his wrath, however, upon his own

people, who, he knew, would not retaliate. It is not unusual to vent one's spleen upon the weaker for the benefit of the stronger.

"So you endangered my father's peace and honour, the best master and friend you ever had or could have, for a few worthless barrels of spirits!" he cried, in his wrath.

"How wur we to knaw as you hadn't aconsarted with the ca'pen, Measter Mark?" asked Job, sulkily.

The tools of the evil-doer are generally cowards when face to face with their leader. Mark was a coward in the company of Dangerfield, and never had the courage to withstand him. The mill men were cowards when they saw Mark was angry, and so had not the courage to tell him the whole truth. They concealed from him that there was still a considerable quantity of smug-

gled goods hidden among the stores in the mill.

"I be zure as we wouldn't harm a hiair o' measter's head," growled Levi. "We bean't no wurser than you, zur, for he be your veather, not ours."

Mark's conscience told him that the fault lay with him, but he knew not how to atone for it.

"Does anybody know if the moon's up?" here broke in one of the strange sailors. "We must weigh anchor with the tide, and get the cargo shipped first, or we shall have the coastguard upon us."

Levi stole cautiously into the passage, and thence crept upstairs. There was no moon as yet. He went down again, and said so. The smugglers abused him, just as if he had the control of the heavenly bodies. He, as well as Mark, heartily wished himself free of them, and cursed them in their hearts.

Mark was casting about in his mind how he could get back to his terrified lonely dove when there was a sound of some one trying the back-door.

"Mum's the word," whispered Job, his finger on his lip.

"The Philistines be upon us!" whispered a smuggler, grimly.

The men all appeared paralysed as by some invisible power. The sailors, who had been reclining on the floor, one or two of them asleep, remained as they were, only immovable. Mark, his back against the wall, with Levi, Job, Chivers, and two or three more surrounding him, stood as if transfixed. There was not a sound, scarcely a breath, audible. No one dared to stretch out a hand to extinguish the almost invisible light. Mark's handsome, excited face contrasted strangely with the stolid countenances of his father's men, who stood with

eyes and mouths wide open; while the smugglers looked almost diabolical in the flickering gleams of feeble light that pierced the eyelet-holes of the lantern. And this sudden panic was caused by the lifting of a door-latch! and the door was locked and barred! Such is the power of law, in spite of numerical superiority. Everyone present believed that the coastguard were at the door, but if they were they were as silent as the smugglers, and gave no sign.

In a few minutes the front door was tried, but that was also bolted, and no attempt was made to force either entrance; so the party within felt assured that their presence in the house was undiscovered. Footsteps were afterwards audible in the yard without, and then there was silence.

"Go and look out again," whispered a sailor to Levi. "You know this hole, we don't."

But Levi was still transfixed, and did not move.

"I will go," said Mark, glad of the excuse to leave the company and breathe a moment freely.

He took off his shoes, and crept up-stairs to one of the rooms that overlooked the mill-pond. He had never before felt so keenly sensible of his position, for his conduct had never, hitherto, been brought *home* to him literally. Smuggling was all very well at a distance. It was exciting on the broad seas, and even at Hollow Cove or Muchsandy; but when it came to be practised at Beachton and its mill—while his father was slumbering peacefully and unsuspiciously—he felt all that it involved. Still he was powerless at that moment, and could no more betray those men below who trusted him, and Captain Dangerfield, bad as he was, than he could recall the past. All

he could do was to resolve to withdraw from his colleagues, to pay Solomon Hasluck as soon as possible, and to live a new life.

These thoughts flitted through his mind as he crouched below the window till the moon rose. He could not see her, for she was not at once visible from the low lattice, but he saw her reflection in the silent waters of the pond. Remaining to watch a minute or so, he perceived several dim figures ascending the hill beyond, and murmured two words of thanksgiving. We all use the Great Name when we escape from danger, be we good or evil; and Mark did so when he was assured that the coastguard were mounting Mushroom Bank on their way to Hollow Cove. At the same time he laughed at their mistake. He remained watching, forgetful of all but them, until they were lost to view over the hill. Then he descended to relieve the minds of the

waiters below by the news that their enemies had disappeared.

Job Tuck and Chivers went forth to reconnoitre, and finding the coast to all appearance clear, the remainder of the party followed them to the mill-pond, bearing various kinds of implements. The smugglers also carried arms, in case of a sudden attack.

"I be gwain to zee to measter," whispered Levi to Mark, for that reproof of Mark's had stung his dulled intellect, and, he was, besides, terribly frightened; so he suddenly disappeared.

One or two of the other men slunk away unobserved, and Mark longed to do so also, but could not leave his colours, tarnished and befouled though they were.

"Now for the rakings of the moon," said a smuggler, as that pure and innocent luminary looked down resignedly upon a

work she did not probably approve, though she countenanced it.

The "rakings of the moon" was a title bestowed by the smugglers on a peculiar part of their work. When they foresaw reprisals, either by sea or land, they contrived to cast their merchandise into the ocean, or the nearest lake, river, or pond, as it chanced. To their well-tarred barrels of spirits were appended what they called *sinkers*, which were so cunningly managed that none but they could find them. Not all the wit and art of Government or Excise officers could discover what or where these were. Thus, when Firman and Jerusha watched, from Mushroom Bank, the boats chased by the *Invincible*, those boats threw their cargo overboard, and found it again by means of these invisible agents.

On the present occasion Job and Chivers

pointed out the spot near the mill-dam where they had thrown in what Levi called the "rubbish from the dairy-house," with the whispered words, "The kags be there," and the smugglers and fishermen cast in what they called their *rakes*, and soon caught the sinkers. The barrels appended to them were drawn up in no time, hoisted one by one on the shoulders of the men, and carried off, at all risks, down the cart-road to Beachton, where the coasting-vessel, which had put in for her *leak*, was awaiting them.

As all Beachton was asleep, and the Preventive men believed to be elsewhere, this wild scene was rapid and uninterrupted.

And wild it was, despite the peaceful nature of the surroundings. There were the dark figures on the mill-dam, working

so silently that Jerusha's swans were not aroused; the sombre waters scarcely illuminated by the often-clouded moon; the indistinct out-buildings, the bare shivering trees, the shuddering rushes, and the great silent mill-wheel; and there was the babbling brook, and the impatient dripping of the curbed waterfall that turned the wheel when let loose.

There, too, was Mark, eager, fretful, indescribably anxious. If only they could be got off safely this once he would never let them come near the mill again. What if there was a watch stationed at Beachton? What if Firman was there, who had been summoned from the villa for some such business as this?

Mark stood behind one of the trees to watch the smugglers, after he had helped to place their burdens on their backs; for he did not volunteer as porter himself—and

still, when the last man disappeared, and all seemed safe, he continued to gaze on vacancy, irresolute what to do next.

CHAPTER IX.

"MEN MUST WATCH, AND WOMEN MUST WEEP."

ON one side solitary Janey, on the other the smugglers. Mark stood hesitating between them. The balance moved, and the smugglers outweighed Janey. Mark turned from his dove in the ivied pine-end, and walked rapidly down the rock-hidden way to the sea. He felt that he could not rest until he knew that the smuggling vessel was afloat. He reached the point overlooking the little bay just in time to see two of the men he had followed wade, waist high, through the surf with the kegs, hoist them into the little craft, and climb up to her

deck after them. In a few minutes the vessel was under weigh, and safe from the land-sharks. If the sea-sharks were near, the night was scarcely clear enough to allow of their swallowing up the smugglers' bark.

The only figure moving about Beachton was Job Tuck, stealing home to his bed. Chivers and the others had disappeared by another route. Mark took a long breath when he was assured that all was safe, and paused a moment to watch the vessel out of the little harbour, and on to the heaving, booming sea. She, and the ocean that bore her, were the only moving objects when Job had stolen silently into his hut. How peaceful it all seemed, yet were many hearts aching. Job's wife was awake, expecting him there in the midst of the slumbering hamlet; the women at Seagull's Nest were equally anxious; and as to those at the mill, they were restless as we know, for

"Men must watch, and women must weep."

But if they must watch and weep, let it be, at least, for a lawful livelihood and honest partners.

So thought unstable Mark, as he looked almost unconsciously on the hamlet, backed by hills, flanked by rocks, and fronted by ocean, with just a gleam of moonlight flickering now and again into the nest.

The craft was safe on the broad sea, and he was soon hidden in the rocky road. This was arched with brambles, dry furze, and bracken, so that no moonlight penetrated. As he was striding rapidly homeward, he encountered Firman, followed by some of his men. He was arrested by a commanding voice, which he recognised, and was obliged to summon his wits, in order to account for himself. He did so boldly enough at the words "Who goes there?"

"I am Mark Gay, of the mill," he said.

"You are out late, or, rather, early, Mr. Gay," returned Firman, stopping short in front of him.

"So are you, Mr. Coastguardsman," said Mark, jauntily. "We can't quarrel on that point."

"We are on duty. I have been on the watch since I left you at Miss Hasluck's. There are smugglers ahead, and they are as slippery as eels. Have you met anybody?" said Firman, as Mark sought to pass on.

"Not I, although I have been also on the look-out. I suppose it was you and your men I saw wandering about the mill, and then mounting Mushroom Bank? One is never at rest now-a-days."

"Possibly. Are you quite sure of all your people? If you would take a word of advice, I would counsel you to see to them. I take it your father is unsuspicious, so you, who know what storms and calms

and quicksands are, should be wary for his sake, your wife and sister's, if not for your own. You are going home, I hope, for, you know, *I* am on duty."

"What is that to you, Lieutenant Firman? I suppose I can go and come as I like, late or early."

"Certainly. But beware of the consequences. Remember that I found you late one night near Seagull's Nest; that you were late for your wedding; that you are late again now. A word to the wise. Good night."

As Firman said this cautiously, his men gained on him.

"It is only Mr. Mark Gay," he added aloud, as he held out his hand to Mark, who was sulky, and did not take it, but passed him by without more words.

The men said "Good night, sir," and walked on; while Mark put spurs to his

lagging spirit, and soon reached the mill, into which he crept like a culprit, as he was, and stole upstairs noiselessly.

He was met by Jancy in the passage, who threw herself into his arms, and fainted, for the terror and the cold had been too much for her. He carried her to bed, himself in an agony of fear, pressed her in his arms, called her by every endearing epithet, heaped the clothes on her, bathed her face, yet failed to restore her. She lay like the "Lily Maid of Astolat," to all appearance dead. He forgot himself and his dress, and ran to Jerusha's door. She was still up, looking by candle-light for the figure she was sure she had seen. She had thrown some sort of clothing over her, so she followed Mark as soon as she heard his hurried "Jerusha, Janey is ill! She is insensible, and looks as if she were dead."

"Don't wake father," she said, as she

passed his door; for he had slept quietly through a night so disturbed to his children.

"Is she dead?" asked Mark, his face white as his young bride's with eager horror. "She must have been walking in her sleep, as she used to do."

"No, no. Rub her hands while I get something," replied Jerusha, going back to her room and medicine chest, and preparing a restorative.

But Mark's impassioned kisses and self-reproaches revived Janey before she returned. The poor child opened her eyes, and smiled at sight of Mark. She soon recovered from her temporary unconsciousness, and, putting her arms round him, whispered faintly,

"I—I was so frightened. I could not stay alone in the dark. But I—I did not tell Rushy; indeed—indeed, I tried to do

what you told me, dear. I will try to be braver, and *obey* you."

"If you told the whole world I should not mind, now you are alive again, my own, my darling!" cried Mark, bursting into a wholesome flood of tears.

And thus Jerusha found them; and thus, after insisting upon Janey's taking the warm draught she brought, she left them; for Janey was well again, re-assured and happy, as soon as her beloved was there.

Not so Jerusha. She had indeed passed a troubled night, and tried in vain to understand its events: Firman beneath her window; Janey by her bedside—for she now felt assured it had been she; Mark not undressed, and Janey unconscious; what did it all mean? Her clear, healthy mind was perplexed, and she resolved to speak seriously to Mark, and to discover, if possible,

his secret, if he had one, and to entreat him to be steady, for Janey's sake.

But Mark appeared at breakfast gay and careless as usual. He was so early that Jerusha scarcely believed he had gone to bed at all.

"Better say nothing to father about Janey's being poorly last night," he whispered to Jerusha. "She will be down directly, and is quite well."

And she came down before the breakfast was over, with a sort of apology for being late; looking smiling, but tired, and averting her eyes from her sister.

"What's the matter, my pretty Janey?" asked the miller. "Dinner-parties don't agree with you. You look like an ice-candle before Christmas is come, and we don't need Father Frost yet."

Janey kissed him, and sheltered herself in silence, while he and Mark discussed

Miss Martha's party, and disputed hotly the merits of Mrs. Firman and her son. Mr. Gay praised, and Mark depreciated them, and when they asked Jerusha's opinion, she forbore to give it, taking refuge, like Janey, in silence.

Jerusha seized an opportunity to speak to Mark concerning the events of the past night, but he skilfully parried her questions. Still she pressed upon him the sin of duplicity, and entreated him to candour if he were in any difficulty. But he evidently did not choose to give her an account of his actions, and only grew angry when she questioned him closely concerning them. Happily he was not, like Dangerfield, apt at lying, and when he found the truth disadvantageous, he usually got into a passion to hide his confusion. When he reached this point, Jerusha always knew that sensible conversation was hopeless.

"Well, Mark," she said, herself a little excited, "all cannot be right, when Janey faints, and you are still fully dressed at three o'clock in the morning. You have had your way in marrying and bringing your wife here, but you shall not have your way in wearing all our lives out, if I can help it. I will not have father worried to death, or be worried myself, because you choose to be up when you ought to be in bed."

"Who wants to worry him or you, Miss Preacher? Janey was only walking in her sleep; but I suppose you are tired of us already, and I hope we shall soon get into the dairy-house," cried Mark, bouncing out of the hall.

When Jerusha inquired of Janey what had brought her, like a ghost, to her bedside, and caused her fainting-fit, Janey said, with hesitation, that she sometimes walked

in her sleep. This was true, and Jerusha had heard it, and seeing how scared and nervous Janey appeared when questioned, she thought it better not to press her, and tried to content herself with hoping that there was nothing really wrong beneath the mystery. She knew that somnambulists were never conscious of what they did in their sleep-walk, and she only prayed that Janey might not some night walk into the mill-pond, during her husband's unaccountable absences from his home.

CHAPTER X.

THREE MONTHS' GRACE.

MR. HASLUCK had kept to himself ever since his summons to appear before the magistrates, and the subsequent sentence. A self-contained, silent man, proud of his respectability, and morally certain that he could never stumble, he was terribly aggrieved by his misfortune. He did not take it kindly. He considered himself wronged, and failed to perceive that he had brought the disgrace on himself by having dealings with people, for the sake of gain, of whose principles he was more than doubtful. He acknowledged the faults of

others, but not his own. Although he could not be certain that either Mark or Dangerfield had anything to do with his disgrace, his mind was always running upon them, and, while biting his nails in solitude over his personal grievances, he was continually seeking occasion to cast them upon those offenders, and to clear himself in the eyes of the world. But as Harding, the bailiff, had disappeared from the scene, leaving behind him only his deaf old wife, of whom nothing could be gleaned concerning him, Solomon was obliged to keep his revengeful feelings to himself. He did so until they were too much for him, and, after brooding over his anger and hatching no relief, he resolved to seek Mark, and have it out with him. This resolution brought him to the mill the day after the "rakings of the moon."

Unfortunately he met Mark just as that young man was marching off from Jerusha,

after her sharp reproof concerning her father's peace of mind. Mark was on his way to Job Tuck's when Solomon hailed him, and was obliged to turn with him, and to learn that he came to have a private conversation. They went together to the stable, and put up Solomon's horse, after which Mark, fretting inwardly, proposed that they should take a look at the dairy-house.

"We shall have an empty room to ourselves there," he said, significantly, "where we can talk and not be overheard."

They went accordingly. Men were at work, but, beyond preparations, little was done to the house as yet, and nothing to its exterior.

"A bleak situation," said Solomon, as they entered by the front door. "You're fond of the sea, and you'll have it; but, for my part, I like a more sheltered spot."

"I don't mean to rest till I make it as snug and handsome a house as yours," replied Mark, chafing.

"Who's to pay?" asked Solomon. "Cost a good bit of money, and I'm come for what you owe me, principal and interest, before both are swallowed up in brick and mortar."

Mark had closed the door of the room where the smugglers had met the previous evening, the shutters of which, however, were now unbarred.

"You can't have it till Dangerfield is back," he said. "The money's safe enough, for it is invested in the *Sea Serpent*, and she makes a fortune every voyage. She's as good as the Bank of England."

"There are reports about her. Some say the captain's not above doing a bit of smuggling, and if so, she may be Crown property any day, like my waggon and hun-

dred. I must have the money. I want it. I'm none so sure that your friend Captain Dangerfield isn't at the bottom of all his bailiff's tricks, and I won't submit to any more of 'em."

"Well, Solomon, I always thought you gave him credit for being a gentleman, if a wild and poor one. There's the Grange still, and that's worth more than what he owes you. Surely you can have a little patience when I'm just married, and he at sea."

"No, I can't. I'm not going to be made a cat's paw of. When do you expect the Captain?"

"I never know; how should I? I'm not in his secrets. The *Sea Serpent's* due in a month or so. If you'll wait I'll be answerable for the money. I don't want father to be bothered, and I shall be settled in this house by that time, for I'm going to work, tooth and nail, till I get in. We

shall do with these rooms for a bit, while they build the new end, and when father sees how steady I am he'll take me into partnership. Nothing like marriage to steady one, Solomon. I wish Rushy were married, and you had her, and could teach her to keep a civil tongue in her mouth, which all women ought to have, if they've got nothing else to recommend 'em."

Not even Solomon's request for his money had allayed Mark's irritation at his sister's lecture.

"Jerusha!" exclaimed Solomon; and his eyebrows, usually immovable as the rest of his face, were actually uplifted. "She has her tempers, but I consider her civil; say nothing to me against Jerusha. I have made up my mind about her this many a year. She's coming round, and making up hers by degrees."

In spite of his anxiety and anger, Mark

could not resist a laugh. He had, like Jerusha, a good sense of the ridiculous, but he smothered it; and glancing knowingly at Solomon's hard, impalpable face, he said,

"I think she *is* coming round, Cousin Sol. That feast of yours, and all the plate, and you so hospitable, and such a fine-looking man, and your house and grounds, and the gig and horse, enough to turn any girl's head. But you musn't be hard upon me, or I'll warrant you she'll never have you, in spite of it all."

Solomon's slow mind could scarcely follow rapid Mark, but he took in what that astute youth intended, and chuckled at his assurances.

"You would not name our business transactions to Jerusha?" he said, laying his hand heavily on Mark's shoulder, who had seated himself on the window-seat, and was, ap-

parently, occupied in observing the intricacies of a spider's web.

"Shouldn't I though!" returned Mark. "It is no good trying to keep anything from Rushy. She's as sharp as a horse-stinger. But here's a money-spider, Sol, so let's see whether we shall get the needful or not, and when I can pay you."

He jumped up, partly to try what an old superstition would do for him; partly to divert Solomon's mind from the loan, and to gain time for such consideration as he was capable of. He felt that he had gained an advantage by alluding to Rushy, and he wished to turn it to account.

A tiny spider was hanging by its thread from the window, and he carefully took hold of the fine web, and swung it round his head.

"Once—twice—thrice," he said, while cautiously making these circles with the

delicate chain to which the insect clung. "There, Solomon! I shall have the money in less than three months, and I promise not to tell Rushy, if you'll wait, as well as to recommend you."

So saying, he completed the proverbial act by putting the spider into his pocket, whither the money was to follow it; for, according to the saying, if the spider completed the third circle without quitting the thread, the gold would surely come.

Mark never knew whether he owed his respite to the spider or Jerusha, but it was due to one of them.

"In three months, then, Mark," said solemn Solomon, with the face and manner of a Jewish money-lender. "If I don't have it in three months, I shall apply to your father. You think Jerusha is coming round, and will govern her little tempers, and not be obstinate any more?"

"No doubt of it," cried Mark, relieved from his pressing difficulty, and careless again. "Try her. Come now and see her. She was wondering why you hadn't been only the other day, and so was Janey. They're so fond of you, Solomon. Why, you're quite a lady's man; everybody has been saying so since the wedding, and as to Janey, she has never ceased talking of your politeness, and the capital feast you gave us."

"Has she? and Jerusha?" said Solomon, flattered.

"Of course. Come and see them," said Mark, who was out of the dairy-house and half across the yard, before Solomon realised his new character of a lady's man. "Rushy! Rushy!" he cried, entering the dwelling-house by the back-door, and shouting loud.

Jerusha appeared in consternation, for

she had been expecting evil all the day, and feared it had now come.

"What is the matter now, Mark?" she asked.

"Nothing. Only Solomon is here, and the poor fellow is down in the mouth about the smuggling business," replied Mark. "He was so kind at the wedding that I want you and Janey to be particularly civil to him, that's all, and I think it's the least you can do."

"Janey was never uncivil to anyone, and I—well, I am sorry if I said anything to offend you, brother," said Jerusha, holding out her hand, and looking at him anxiously.

"Never mind that now, but you were provoking, Rushy," said Mark, kissing her. "Here he is! Remember, you must receive him warmly."

The next moment Mark was in the yard with Solomon, and Jerusha had gone to

prepare Janey for his arrival, and to school herself to the required warmth.

Nothing could be more cordial than his reception, for both she and Mr. Gay outdid themselves in their friendly welcome and hospitality, while Janey went so far as to say,

"I am so glad you have come, Cousin Solomon; I never thanked you half enough for your kindness, but I assure you I have felt it ever since."

He began to agree with Mark that he really was a "lady's man," and made an attempt to hand the toast and the tea-kettle, which resulted in a piece of the one finding its way to the ashes under the grate, and a few drops of water from the other to the cat's back. Solomon hated cats, and when she set up her back, and spat defiantly at him, he excused himself from further gallantry with the reflection that woman was

made for man, and must therefore wait upon him.

"When I have somebody of my own I shall know better," he said, withdrawing from his enemy, and uplifting his foot.

"Don't, Cousin Solomon!" cried Rushy, jumping up and seizing her cat. "Men are all alike. They hurt an animal, and punish it because it turns on them. They make a horse furious, and half kill it because it kicks against the cruelty, or tries to run away from it. Poor pussy! He's an unjust, cruel man."

"Jerusha!" said Solomon, striding towards her and her cat, "you are too free with your words."

"Don't! she is frightened at you," exclaimed Rushy, and the discomfited lover sat down.

"Do be kind to him, Rushy," whispered

Mark, while the miller laughed his genial, hearty laugh.

"I try, but I can't," replied Rushy to Mark aside; then aloud, "Never mind, Cousin Solomon. I don't think the water went below the fur. Let me give you another cup of tea. Do be quiet, puss."

"If you please, Jerusha," he answered, edging near her; but pussy put up her neck, and kept him at a distance. "She has her tempers like you, my dear," he said.

Still he was more than satisfied with his reception. No one spoke of smuggling, and he forgot his grievance. He gave Janey sundry messages from her home, invited them all to come and see him in the Spring, and promised them another feast.

"You'll have lots of time for preparation, Sol. We shall be in our own house by that time," said Mark.

"I hope you'll pay us many a visit between this and that, and bring over Mrs. Joe, and the young ones," remarked the miller, who disliked uncertain invitations.

But Solomon made no promise. His speech was slow, his deeds slower.

When he took leave he managed to let Jerusha understand that he was still of the same mind; and when Mark saw him off, he said—

"Three months, Cousin Mark; I'm sure Jerusha's coming round, and making up her mind."

This "three months" was a spur to Mark. Always unsettled, he took it into his head that if he could get into his own house, he should feel more independent, and, perhaps, realise the money. While really wishing "to lead a new life," he said to himself that he could not relinquish the old one until he had received his dues. He

and Dangerfield must come to a settlement first, and he must also have a reckoning with the men who were his subordinates. All this could be effected at the dairy-house, where he would be, at least, beyond Jerusha's suspicious eyes, for she could not see the people who came to the front of that dwelling from her bed-room window, if she could see the visitors to the back. Its capabilities for secresy were great, as it was approached from the road hidden by rocks, and visible only from the sea, and he wondered that he had never thought of this before.

He accordingly represented to his father that, if he had no objection, he should like to take possession of the house as it was, as soon as the interior was renovated, and to superintend the building of the new wing while located in the old part. Janey, as was her wont, wished what he wished, and

seconded him; indeed, like all young wives, she was ambitious of a house of her own. They urged that there were rooms enough for them to begin with, and that if the old dairy were converted into a kitchen there might even be two parlours; for Janey's weak point was sitting-rooms. There were two good up-stairs rooms, and two smaller ones, formerly used as cheese and apple rooms, which would be more than enough for them and a servant, as they were not likely to have many visitors while the hospitable mill was close at hand. In short, they made out such a clear case that Mr. Gay was convinced at once; but not so Jerusha. Much as she wished to have her own house to herself, she maintained that the dairy-house had been too long empty, was too exposed, and in too rickety a condition to be turned suddenly into a dwel-

ling, particularly in the Winter. Janey was delicate, she argued, and the situation might be too bleak, or the house damp, or a hundred other things might work her ill.

"You always go against what I propose, Rushy," said Mark, particularly ready to be on the defensive at that period. "The house is not much more exposed than Kimberlin Cottage, which is due nor' east. Besides, the walls are thick. You are for having everything your own way, whether we like it or not."

"If Rushy had had her way I don't think you would have married till you had a good furnished house ready to receive you," said the miller.

"Oh, Rushy!" ejaculated Janey, to whom delay would have been like no wedding at all.

"Rushy is always happiest alone. She

doesn't want interlopers. And when she has them she watches them," said Mark sulkily.

Jerusha's colour mounted, and a quick speech was on her lips, but the proverb, "A soft answer turneth away wrath," shot through her mind, and she merely replied, quietly, but resolutely,

"You and your wife could scarcely be interlopers in your father's house, Mark, and I hope I shall always be able to watch in case of illness, or where the family interest is concerned, for what benefits and harms one, benefits or harms us all."

"And what does my pretty Janey say?" asked the miller. "She has expressed no opinion."

Janey looked from one to the other, fearful to offend either, then moved towards Mark.

"Speak out, Janey, can't you?" said Mark

irritably. "It is as bad to be always silent as to be always talking."

"You will not offend me, dear," said Rushy, smiling at an indecision she scarcely understood.

"I like what Mark likes," said timid Janey at last, looking steadfastly on the ground.

"You are a good little wife, and you shall have it," exclaimed Mr. Gay heartily. "Rushy will have her turn by-and-by, and then you shall help to furnish her new house; for of course she will have one of her own too in due time."

"That is furnished already," said Mark, glancing at his sister. "The Hill Farm is substantial."

But she made no reply. She was hurt at being misunderstood by those she loved best, even by her father, for she felt that she, in whose warm heart dwelt no back-

thought, and who desired nothing so much as their happiness, was accounted selfish because she was prudent. Yet she scarcely could believe that Mark was serious in thinking that she ever intended to make Solomon Hasluck's abode hers.

As usual, Mark had his way. As weather did not interfere much with interior alterations and adornments, the work of refitting and adjusting the old dairy-house went on rapidly. The new wing and the exterior were delayed till the Spring, which season, Mark said, would be more propitious for out-of-door labour, and as he could be the most active of men when activity suited his mood, he worked early and late to complete his dwelling.

"There is nothing Mark can't do," said his father, as he watched him papering and painting.

"Yes, he is naturally very clever," responded Jerusha, who, while praising, still misdoubted him.

As to Janey, her days passed happily, if not usefully, in pottering about after her husband and sister-in-law. She flattered herself she was busy, and no one undeceived her, but she occasionally tried Jerusha's quick temper by hindering rather than aiding her, in her persistent attempts to do what her sister-in-law did.

"You have the patience of all the saints and martyrs, Rushy," was Miss Martha's assertion. "I should be wild if Janey was to lease after me from morning to night, and glean nothing."

"It will soon be over. She is like a child whose mother never taught her," replied Rushy.

"Over! 'Tis but beginning. Janey's

slack-twisted, as they say, and you'll have two houses instead of one to superintend, when they are settled over the way."

"That I shall certainly not do," said Jerusha, decidedly. "When they are set going they must do for themselves, for I hate interference myself, and don't mean to meddle."

"Janey can't, Mark won't," said Miss Martha. "It will be

> "'Liazy Larrence, let me goo,
> Don't hold me zummer and winter too.'"

"Janey seems to me not to have the power to work," returned Jerusha thoughtfully. "God does not give us all equal strength, either of body or will; but she is very amiable."

"What's the good of an amiable idiot? But she was born in May, and May chits

whether children or cats, are only good to be drowned," rejoined Miss Martha, with customary resolution.

CHAPTER XI.

HAPPIER THAN TWO CHILDREN.

IT was a hard Winter. The elements seemed to conspire against Beachton, and to threaten to bring starvation to its inhabitants. Fishing was impossible; and the boats were hauled up from the beach, and laid by till more promising times. Some of them were sheltered by the villa wall, and lay, bottom upwards, on either side of the entrance-gate, while others reposed from their labours close to the huts. The fishermen had literally nothing to do, except to wander about the beach, picking up mundic, an ore found among the pebbles, while

their wives and children made nets, and took them to Sandport to dispose of, but the proceeds did not go far towards the support of a family. But for the mill and villa, it would have gone hard with them indeed. There was also much sickness in the hamlet and neighbouring cottages, and Miss Martha and Jerusha had more than they could do in their daily ministrations abroad; while Mrs. Firman was ailing, and Janey not well, in their respective homes.

It was as Jerusha had predicted—the dairy-house, or, as Mark chose to call it, The Bluffs, was too cold for Janey, and they had got into it before it was properly seasoned. But there they were, and, to all appearance, comfortable and happy; at any rate the waves which threatened to engulf Beachton did not reach them. They were able to survey them serenely from their cottage on the cliff, and Mark could sweep

the horizon with his telescope, in a search for the *Sea Serpent*, or any other vessel that interested him. Mr. Gay had furnished the house well, and Mark made magnificent promises in return to stick to business and his father.

Much responsibility fell upon Jerusha. She was abroad at all hours, nursing the sick or feeding the hungry. The rector and his wife gave her every assistance in their power, but they were more than a mile away, and there was nearly as much privation amongst the agricultural labourers at Woolleysheepfold as with the fishermen at Beachton. The smuggler drove the briskest trade, and the temptations to aid him increased as other trades failed. He dared, under cover of the winds and waves, what honester men would not, and transmitted the fruits of his daring to his accomplices on shore.

Chivers's wife was one of those on Jerusha's sick-list. It chanced one day, about two o'clock, that she walked across the cliff to see her, taking with her a few presents for her and her children. It was a hard frost, and the cliff path was slippery with rime. She knew that it was dangerous, but she loved the excitement and the sharp, bracing air. She reached Seagull's Nest safely, and was soon in the fisherman's cottage. Mrs. Chivers was in bed, an infant by her side, and half a dozen other children were either playing about in the poor hut, or busily netting. They had not much fire, and little food, so Jerusha soon emptied her basket, and had the happiness of seeing mother and children supplied with edibles at least.

"What a strong smell of spirits, Mrs. Chivers!" she said, while they were eating her good cheer. "I hope you don't drink any, for they might do you harm."

"Dear heart, no, miss," replied the woman. "'Tis as much as ever we get a drop o' cider, much less spirits."

But Jerusha was sure she smelt something stronger than cider. She had no time for questions, however, and, indeed, did not consider that she had any right to pry into her neighbour's affairs. She had more than she could do to feed and advise them.

She was soothing the wailing infant, which she had taken while its mother was eating, when Chivers came in. He was too much pre-occupied to notice her at first, but began at once to disembarrass himself of a load he carried on his back. To all appearance it was a large fish-basket full of mundic, but Jerusha soon perceived that the ore was merely a blind for a keg of spirits beneath. This was quickly abstracted, and rolled under the sick woman's bed, while Chivers looked anxiously at the door. He had

barely time to stuff a net into the basket, and replace the mundic, when Lieutenant Firman entered, with the words, "In the Queen's name," on his lips.

He was followed by two of his men, at a distance, but as he paused on the threshold of the hut, he motioned them to withdraw.

The scene that met him was pathetic in its simple poverty. The wife in bed, supported by her hard pillow, thankfully swallowing the food brought her; Jerusha near her, in her rosy youth, walking up and down with the infant, now asleep in her arms; the children seated or standing about the rickety table, devouring their food; and Chivers bending over his basket, as if he had just taken it from his back. Firman understood it all at a glance, and Jerusha, perceiving him, and having seen the small barrel of brandy, guessed what brought him there. She gave him an entreating look,

and went towards him, the baby still in her arms.

"Poor Mrs. Chivers has been very ill," she whispered. "They have only this room and a place where the children sleep, and they seem to have neither food nor money."

"Pray come in, sir," said Chivers, sulkily. "You're welcome to look in my basket. 'Tis hard that one can't go out or come in without being watched, as if one was a thief."

He turned out the mundic and nets at Firman's feet, which was all that the basket contained.

"I'm sorry that my duty-work should make me appear cruel," returned Firman; "and at the same time I am glad to be mistaken. You appear in some distress, and I understand that your wife is ill."

"Everybody's in distress," groaned the man. "Who can make an honest living by

that—or that? We've nothing else to do of a hard Winter."

He pointed to the ore, and then to a large net in process of manufacture. He was a man of some education, and had been better off. Firman's face showed compassion, and he took some money from his pocket, and said, with hesitation,

"If you would not be offended, I would help you as far as lies in my power; but I am not rich, and cannot do all I would."

"Offended! God bless you, sir, poverty can't afford to take offence," replied Chivers, receiving the silver, and rising from the low seat he had maintained hitherto.

Firman withdrew, with a glance at Jerusha; and if he needed a reward, he had it in her flushed cheeks and tearful eyes. She went up to Chivers, and said, in a low voice,

"Oh, Chivers, is this right? Your child-

ren must have seen the barrel as I did, and they will learn to lie, and who can be to blame?"

"Bad times and the taxes, miss. One must live somehow; I can't see my wife and children starve. Look you nearer home, and maybe you'll keep your eyes open. God never meant us to truckle to unjust rule—and the rich don't take heed of the poor."

"Read the thirteenth chapter of Romans, Chivers. God says there that 'Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil,' and that we are to render 'tribute to whom tribute is due.' I am not learned in such matters, but it seems to me that we 'must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.' It is the Bible, not I, that says that."

The texts pricked Chivers, for he could not gainsay them, and had often been struck by them before.

"You won't tell upon me, miss, and I'll give it up. I promise to give it up. Show you that chapter to Measter Mark, and get him to read it; for one must listen to God's Word, even if we be starving. But them 'Rulers' don't know what we poor volk have to go through. 'Tis all very fine for them as have lots of money to talk and write for them as have got none, and for the newspapers to print it off, but they can't *feel* it."

"But there's One above that can and does, Chivers," said Jerusha, as she gently replaced the infant by its mother's side, and wished her good-bye, with a promise of return.

She left the hut with a sad heart, followed by the blessings of the poor souls whom she had cheered.

Firman was waiting for her at the bottom of the ravine, and greeted her with the words,

"I'm going to see my mother, and I thought I might walk with you. The wind is rising, and the cliffs are not safe; so you had better return by the beach, rough as it is."

The tide was receding, but the sea was wild, and the wind high. Jerusha loved the waves when they rolled up the beach in mountainous billows, and half drenched her with their foam; and she dearly loved to be alone with Firman. Her spirits rose, and became as wild as the sea, when they stood together on the beach, to watch the riotous, uncompromising ocean.

"I was on the cliff yonder when I saw Chivers come out from amongst those rocks," said Firman, pointing to Hollow Cove. "I have seen him and other men about there before, and have failed to discover how they get there. I am convinced

some of them are smugglers, though I cannot catch them in the act."

"Perhaps you or I would be smugglers if we were starving," said Jerusha, reflectively.

"No, we should not. Better starve than do wrong, and risk the happiness of all you love," he replied.

A vessel suddenly appeared round the point, near the Cove, and he put up his glass.

"I believe it is the *Sea Serpent* again," he exclaimed. "Dangerfield's a wary fellow, and knows that the *Invincible* is elsewhere, or he wouldn't venture his craft so near Sandport."

"What has the *Invincible* to do with him?" asked Jerusha.

"Nothing, beyond a game at hare and hounds," returned Firman, ambiguously.

"But if the *Sea Serpent* does not put in somewhere this boisterous weather she'll stand a chance of being wrecked."

The vessel was much tossed about by the billows, and Firman's foreboding seemed not unlikely to be fulfilled.

"May God keep us from shipwrecks! We have had none this Winter as yet," said Jerusha, as she climbed to a large boulder to watch the ship, which suddenly disappeared within Hollow Cove.

She and Firman then proceeded together along the beach. Now their path was difficult, if not dangerous, over masses of rocky stones, amongst which lay pools of sea-water; anon, smooth over a stretch of sand. Firman paused to admire the sea anemones, and to compare them, involuntarily, to Jerusha's cheeks; while she picked up here and there a struggling crab, and returned it to its native element. They

were gay and happy as children, and would as gladly have prolonged their walk as they their play. Unconscious, or, perhaps, conscious lovers, the soft moonlight, or the stormy ocean alike ministered to a passion, innocent as it was natural. They neither felt the frost nor feared the brine, as they struggled onwards, sometimes hand in hand, for Jerusha's support, at others side by side, when no support was needed. They had nearly reached Beachton, when Firman said abruptly,

"If ever I am rich enough to marry, would there be a chance for me, or has some luckier fellow been before me?"

Jerusha scarcely understood him. The red cheeks grew redder as she glanced at him, and met his earnest eyes. The expression of his face was comprehensible enough. What her fancy had sometimes dimly pictured had come, and her usually

ready tongue was silent. She stood still with downcast head, while Firman took her hand and "told his love." The manner and the scene befitted the sailor. His words were rapid and resolute, and the waves and winds boisterous and healthful. He could no more restrain his passionate feelings than they their exuberance, and they burst their chains in spite of his maturer judgment. It was a wild scene for a love tale, but true hearts forget cold, and theirs were true as the tides, which, with all their fluctuations, ever return to the same point.

"Is there any hope for me, Jerusha?" he said, as she stood facing the giant waves, her lips parted by a smile, and her dimples unfolding like the pink sea-anemone aforesaid. "I know I ought not to speak; but just one little word of encouragement would give me heart to persevere in life. I ask

no promise, only a hope. And what were life without hope?"

Jerusha, either by word or look, gave him the fickle, many-hued "hope" he craved; for had she not loved him almost from their first meeting? The place and hour would have precluded further explanation had nothing else occurred. But as he was holding her hand and looking into her eyes some one passed them. She withdrew from him instinctively, and moved towards Beachton. The figure of a man disappeared round the point of rock which sheltered the little bay, turning to look at them before being lost to sight.

"Was that Captain Dangerfield?" she asked.

"I think so, and he is also an admirer of my Jerusha, as who is not?" replied Firman, taking her hand once more to help her over the few remaining stones.

Happier now even than two children, for they knew they were but one, even though no promise had either been asked or given.

CHAPTER XII.

ALONE WITH DANGERFIELD.

WHEN Firman had left Jerusha at the door of her house he began to realise what he had done. Hitherto he had imagined himself firm as a rock; he now acknowledged himself weak. He loved Jerusha with the love a man feels for the woman he wishes to make his wife, and felt all the joy that a consciousness of mutual affection brings. But ought he to have been so carried away by her goodness, beauty, and vivacity as to have uttered those inconsiderate words, involving not only himself but her? As he approached the villa

he said to himself that he had been wrong, and that he had done what he would have condemned in another. He dreaded to encounter his mother, whose mute disapproval would be more trying than a torrent of words. But he was not ashamed of his love, only of the sudden weakness that had impelled him to declare it.

He found Mrs. Firman confined to her bed with a violent cold, and Miss Martha fussing over a particular posset in the dining-room, aided, or hindered, as might be, by Captain Bowles. Miss Martha said that Mrs. Firman must have the posset at once, and requested Frank to try to find something to say to the Captain while she went to administer it. He was glad of any delay, and, with his heart full of Jerusha, tried to interest himself in Miss Martha's guest, whom he was inclined to like, in spite of his inclination for gossip.

We have said that Captain Bowles was inquisitive, and had nothing to do but to meddle with his neighbours' affairs. He had latterly added those of the Firmans, mother and son, to his inquiry list. His one object appeared to be to discover their history without disclosing his own. He haunted the villa even more than usual, and divided his attentions between Mrs. Firman and Miss Martha, so that the latter lady frequently declared herself jealous, while the former said little and listened much, while desiring to know all or more than was to be known.

"What Bowles' did you know, Firman?" asked the Captain abruptly, when he and Frank were left alone. "You asked me about the family."

"You are the only person of that name I have ever had the honour of being acquainted with," replied the lieutenant.

"My mother can tell you all about her Bowles'."

"She is so confoundedly close. Not that it matters to me, for I haven't a relation in the world, and don't want any. Those who have relations find 'em more plague than profit. Miss Martha does. Why her nephews and nieces are like a flock o' cormorants; and even that puritanical Solomon Hasluck is looking for her money. Pity a clever, sensible woman like that don't marry, but she says she won't, and I think she means it. I mean to leave my kit to Rushy Gay, the nicest girl in the country, and I've nothing but my kit. Haw! haw! I don't know what she'll do with a kit, though she makes the best of most things."

"I thought you were a sailor, and not a soldier, Captain Bowles. Have you known Miss Gay long?" asked Frank.

"Any reason for asking? Tell me all

you know about the Bowles', and I'll tell you all I know about Rushy Gay."

"I can only tell you, what I suppose you know already, that my mother's maiden name was Bowles, and that was the reason of our being struck by your name. But she, like yourself, has no relations save myself."

"Whew!" whistled the Captain. "And she married a man named Firman? Never heard that name in my life before, though I knew a Miss Bowles who married."

"And Miss Gay? You were speaking of her," said Frank.

"And you are thinking of her," returned the Captain, with a wink, as Miss Martha re-appeared.

Firman was soon seated by his mother's bedside. She looked ill and worried. The truth was that Miss Martha fussed her, and it was with difficulty she could restrain herself from entreating to be let alone. Miss

Martha had taken such a fancy to her that she could not do enough for her; and what with possets, gruel, white wine whey, *lait-de-poule*—or, as Miss Martha called it, Lady Poole—and every other restorative, poor Mrs. Firman was nearly killed by kindness. But her son could only guess at this, for she made no open comments. She was nervous about herself, and told him that she feared a long illness. He tried to re-assure her, and said Miss Martha had arranged for her to take possession of her lodgings in March. It was now the end of January, and she was beginning to wish to be settled.

"She is very good, and it is a great saving," said Mrs. Firman, with a little impatient movement that Frank understood. "But it is too great an obligation."

"Mother, I have done something you will not like," interrupted the son. "I have told Jerusha Gay that I love her, and

asked her to marry as soon as I can afford to keep a wife."

He never beat about the bush, and the announcement was made without preface, so it was not surprising that, self-possessed as she always was, Mrs. Firman started, and showed displeasure in her voice as she replied,

"You have been hasty, and will repent. Unequal marriages bring misery. Besides, you cannot marry. What will become of me?"

She burst into tears. Frank scarcely remembered ever to have seen her cry, for she avoided all display of emotion. He put his arms around her, but she repulsed him with almost childish irritability. She was not only displeased at his choice, but jealous that he should care for another more than for herself. He was hurt at her lack of sympathy, and said, almost coldly,

"I thought you would at least have rejoiced at my happiness, mother, even if you consider me imprudent. I have sacrificed much for yours, and I had hoped that I should have had your sympathy at least."

No sooner had those words escaped him than he wished them unsaid, feeling them ungenerous.

"You have sacrificed much for me. It has been life for life," she returned quietly, and laying her head back on the pillow, she drew the clothes over her, and resolutely restrained the tears.

"Will you not wish me joy, mother, for Rushy returns my love?" he whispered, bending his head to hers.

"To-morrow, Frank; I am too sick for joy to-day," she replied. "Your joy is my grief."

He sighed, touched the coverlet with his

lips, and left her; for he was angry with his mother for the first time.

And thus, in a few brief minutes, and two or three short sentences, he had made one woman intensely happy and another intensely miserable.

The happy one, Jerusha, failed to realise her bliss. She was thankful to be alone when she entered the house after parting with her lover. Her father was not in, so she sat down in the old bee-hive chair in which Firman had once slumbered, and ruminated over what had so lately passed. It had been so rapid that she scarcely believed it real. Yet he had assuredly asked her for her love, there on the windy shore, beneath the rock, in the twilight, that blusterous January evening. And she? Had she not given it too readily? For, oh! how glad she was to know how much he

cared for her! Her blushes, and the tell-tale dimples, responded to the flickering flames as she sat meditating by the fire, not knowing or caring if she were cold or warm; conscious of nothing but a strange happiness.

For the first time she fled at the sound of her father's footstep in the passage—fled to gain breathing time before she could summon courage to tell him—for she had no secrets from him. She could wait, she thought, for their cozy after-tea hour, and confide it to him by the firelight; and she waited, but the tale was not told that night. Even while she was framing her words, and fluttering about him, as if movement would aid her better than quietude, a message came from Janey to entreat her company at The Bluffs, as she was alone, and not very well.

"Go at once, my Rushy," said Mr. Gay;

"I thought our pretty Janey out of sorts this morning, when I looked in upon her."

So Jerusha went, and the delicate secret remained untold for that first evening.

She found Janey alone, and learnt from her that Captain Dangerfield had been there and carried off Mark. Janey had not herself seen him, but had received orders from her husband to prepare a bed for him, in case he should return there to sleep. Jerusha inquired how long the Captain had remained, and was told about an hour, during which time Janey fancied she heard high words between him and Mark in their other sitting-room. She was so poorly, and the tempestuous winds that rocked the house frightened her so much, that she had sent for Jerusha, who laughed, and asked her if she considered her strong enough to keep the walls from falling, if the winds had force enough to knock them down.

"No, dear, but I always feel safe with you," said Janey, "for you are so courageous."

She was not looking so well as when she first took possession of The Bluffs. The cold house and colder Winter seemed to have frozen up what slight springs of life she possessed. Still she expressed herself happy, and charmed with her house. Certainly, if bright papers and many-coloured carpets could charm, she had every reason to be happy. Mark's somewhat gaudy taste had been gratified both in furniture and fittings, and the small apartment in which Jerusha found Janey was a good sample of the rest of the house. Janey called it her drawing-room, and only chanced to be in it because Mark wished to have a private interview with Dangerfield in their common sitting-room. Consequently the fire had not long been lighted, and the room felt

chilly, although the walls were adorned with many-plumaged birds, and the floor covered with bunches of roses, while the furniture was shining with new polish, and seated with flowery blue damask.

Jerusha could not help thinking how delicate and lily-like Janey looked in the midst of it. Perceiving that she shivered, she made up the fire and kindled it into a blaze, drew the couch near it, and induced her to lie down while they talked. She discovered that she had not had her tea, because, she said, Mark and Captain Dangerfield had ordered in spirits and water just about tea-time, and she had not cared to have her meal alone.

She was evidently under some constraint, and it was with difficulty that Jerusha could draw forth even these particulars.

"What did Mark say when Captain Dan-

gerfield arrived? Did he seem angry or anxious?" asked Rushy.

"I—I—would rather not say, dear," replied Janey timidly, and Jerusha perceived that she had been enjoined silence, which sadly aggravated, not only her inquisitiveness, but her fears. However, she strove to find other subjects of conversation to amuse Janey, in spite of her own pre-occupation, and the warmth and companionship, together with some tea, quickly restored her sister's spirits and circulation.

Jerusha sat with her till nearly ten o'clock, while the elements appeared to be conspiring to topple down the house. The winds above and the waves below raged in concert, and meeting half way down the cliff, fought and lashed one another into impotent fury. Jerusha thought of the *Sea Serpent* and its probable danger, but did not venture to speak of it. After she had ex-

hausted all topics of conversation, she asked Janey if she might read to her, and obtaining permission, she went to a table on which were displayed many wedding-presents, and chose the "Pilgrim's Progress" from amongst a few smartly-bound books.

She had just read Janey to sleep when Mark entered, followed by Dangerfield.

They both looked excited, and their clothes and hair were as if the winds and waves had been equally at work with them. Jerusha feared they had been drinking. The Captain seized her hand eagerly and roughly, while Mark roused Janey, and asked her, aside, why she could never live an hour alone without Rushy? His tone was angry and authoritative, and Janey looked frightened, as she said,

"It was so lonely, dear; but indeed I have not told her anything."

"Is the Captain's bed ready?" he asked

aloud. "Come with me, Janey, and let me see."

Janey followed him from the room with the dazed look of one who walks in her sleep; indeed, she was only half awake. Jerusha's first impulse was to leave also, but a glance at her brother's haggard, anxious face detained her. She was rapid of thought as well as of word and deed, and, resolving what she would do, she allowed herself to be left alone with Captain Dangerfield. There passed through her mind what she had seen in Chivers's house, and she connected it, as if by a sudden inspiration, with the *Sea Serpent*, with the Captain, and with Mark.

"I must know what it all means for Mark's sake," she thought, "and I will try to draw the truth from Captain Dangerfield. At any rate, I will be bold, and not 'fear

what man can do unto me,' for he is only a man, and I have no reason to fear him."

So she remained behind, to the Captain's evident gratification.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONFLICTING ELEMENTS.

HAD not Jerusha been as prompt as she was quick-witted, she would have wasted the opportunity she had seized; for Captain Dangerfield tried to use it for another purpose. He was always ready, through his hazardous life, to seize the minutes as they passed. Scarcely had Mark and Janey disappeared before he approached Jerusha familiarly, and asked her boldly what she was doing with Firman on the beach when he passed her by in the tempestuous twilight—either love-making or plotting, he supposed.

"Captain Dangerfield, I have not remained to give an account of my actions, but to ask what you are doing with my brother?" she said, moving towards the door, and standing between it and the fire-place.

"He is old enough to answer for himself. I am not his keeper; but I should much like to be yours, and to tame you, or rouse you to the proper tune of a sailor's bride," he responded, following her, and speaking more resolutely than ever.

She just touched the door-handle with her fingers, and stood facing him. She was compelled to look up at him as she spoke, for he was tall and powerful. She could not fail to remember that only a few hours before she had been asked to be a "sailor's bride" by a very different person, and the recollection strengthened her. Under no circumstances could she have become the wife of this bold man, and she let his words

pass unnoticed, and continued her own subject.

"Something is amiss with my brother, and you know what it is," she said, decidedly. "If you have led him astray, you should bring him back. You would scarcely be cruel or cowardly enough to wrong him, and together with him his wife and father, upon his own land, and in his own house, where you are, yourself, a guest."

"*Your* friend, the lieutenant, has had no compunction in wronging and ruining me in my own place," he retorted, with a scornful laugh. "But who told you I was leading Mark astray? that sneaking land-lubber, Firman, I suppose, who isn't above tampering with other people's sisters."

"My own senses. Mark is happy and well and affectionate when you are at sea, and morose and unlike himself when you appear—why is this?"

There was something strangely penetrating in Jerusha's clear brown eyes and incisive manner. Dangerfield's bold glance and ready lies halted before them. He dared not speak true; he could not speak false under their influence. He sought an excuse for evading her question, and found it in the shuddering house and shivering, creaking door and window-frames, which seemed about to burst their bounds.

"It will tumble down about our ears. I wish it would," he said, savagely. "I never heard such a row aboard ship," and he walked to the window, unbarred the shutter, and looked out. "Black as Erebus," he muttered; then, without leaving the window, continued, addressing Jerusha, "You are almost as strong-tongued as the elements, Miss Gay. I will answer all your questions if you will answer one of mine. Is there anything between you and that poaching,

Preventive pest, Firman? because, if there is, by—— I'll ruin Mark, and circumvent him."

"I shall not answer your question, and you dare not ruin Mark!" cried Jerusha, her temper rising.

"There is nothing I dare not do to compass my ends, and nothing I could not do to compass yours, if you would but love me," he said, his voice sinking to a plaintive monotone, for he could be gentle if he chose. "Hear me, Jerusha. I will change my life if you will help me, for I can neither be all bad nor all good without you. I will set up at the Grange, and turn pious, turn puritan. I will engage that Mark shall also be a pattern Benedick. I am a ship in drought in the midst of the sea—thirsty—thirsty for love. Oh, be my spring, my geyser of fresh water in the salt ocean of my lost, reckless life!"

Jerusha could not tell if the pathos were genuine or assumed, but it touched her. She glanced pitifully at the dark, ponderous, forbidding figure that seemed to oppress her as he looked down upon her.

"I would help you if I could, but not in the way you ask," she said. "Keep Mark from sin and danger, and there is nothing short of that I would not do for you. Oh, Captain Dangerfield, keep him and all of us from ruin and from shame, and I will thank you, pray for you, though I cannot love you."

The return of Mark at this point broke off the conversation, and she hurried away. Mark walked across the two courts with her. He did so apparently for the purpose of asking her not to mention that she had seen Dangerfield; but she would not promise. He was about to leave her in anger,

but she would not let him, for she had a strange foreboding of evil.

"Suppose that we should never meet again," she said, with a shudder, as the winds shook the old mill, and roared through the bare tops of the lusty elms. "Dear Mark, be gentle with Janey. She will be nipped by hard words as a primula by frost, if you are unkind."

"Don't you suppose I know how to treat my own wife?" said Mark, struggling to release himself from his sister. "There, Rushy, there! Good night, dear. What do you think will happen?" he added, kissing her hastily, as she clung to him, and shuddering, he knew not why.

"I am afraid of nothing but secresy and shame," she said, while the "windy, tall elm trees" shuddered too.

"Be secret and there will be no shame,"

he returned, and hurried back to his abode.

He found Jancy waiting for him alone. Dangerfield had asked to be shown to his room, and when there had locked himself in. Jerusha's entreating words, her expressive face, fearlessness, and innocence, had not been without effect, and he had retired to meditate on how he could best serve and save both Mark and himself.

He had left the *Sea Serpent* that afternoon to come in search of Mark, whom he could no more let alone than a cat a mouse. There was a valuable cargo to be stowed away in the cave, or otherwise disposed of, and he assured Mark that it would pay Solemn Solomon ten times over. Mark, after the usual hot dispute, had gone out with him, but the night was so dark and tempestuous that they could reach neither

the cave nor the vessel, and had come back to The Bluffs, wet, weary, and anxious, not knowing even what the crew had accomplished.

The winds that kept everybody else awake rocked Dangerfield to sleep. He was in the habit of boasting recklessly that his ready sleep was the reward of a good conscience, and certainly had that monitor been unburdened, he could not have slept better. But the fact was, she also slumbered, and so they did not disturb one another. He had long blunted her pricks and counter-poisoned her stings, thus lulling her until she should arouse to re-sharpen the one or touch the other with fresh venom. Opposition was usually his keenest incentive, but the temporary spur given by Jerusha fell off when he lay down on that delicious bed which her care had provided for her brother's guest. She had little

imagined, when she selected the linen from amongst her choicest stores as gifts for Janey, who would be the first to make use of it. He did it honour, for, as he knew that Mark had been careful that no one save his wife and sister should learn who that first guest was, or, indeed, that there was a guest at all, he was able to sleep without personal uneasiness, or present fear.

It was nine o'clock when he awoke. The Almighty had banished the refractory winds to their lairs during the night, and only their distant bellowings and roarings were heard occasionally, like the impotent cries of caged or dying wild beasts. The invading armies of waves were also subdued, and lay, like the hosts of Sennacherib, quieted by the breath of Him who said, "So far and no farther." The sea's tumultuous breast still heaved and fell, swollen with the demoniac passions let loose over-night; but it dared

no new outbreak. It was a deadly warfare, followed by the sullen upheavings of a forced armistice.

The first sight that greeted Captain Dangerfield when, after dressing hastily, he looked out of his window, was his own ship, the *Sea Serpent.* She had no business within sight of land; no business in that direction; no business away from Hollow Cove Point. Had her crew mutinied, or had she been driven off her moorings during the night? Whatever the cause, there, below The Bluffs, out at sea, yet in full view of Beachton, there she was making such way as she could against contrary winds. Her impatient angry master took out his glass to watch her movements. She was sailing off contrary to his orders, and without him. At first he fancied her disabled; but no, she was evidently going under direction, and not at the will of the elements, or because they

had served her badly. He believed every individual of his motley crew was true to him; at any rate feared him, whether present or absent, too much to run counter to him; so he continued to watch narrowly for some commensurate cause for this breach of discipline. He was not long in finding it. Suddenly, round Hollow Cove Point, appeared the *Invincible* in full pursuit. Dangerfield clenched his fist, and swore a terrible oath when he saw her; not only at the enemy, but at himself for leaving his ship, and his crew for letting her be pursued—but neither oath nor fist availed. There were the two vessels, and here was he, a prisoner in a voluntary captivity, unable to direct or aid. It was maddening, and he fretted and swore like a madman.

The *Invincible* was in full sail, and displaying her ensign and pendant. He knew them well, and what they meant. The

ensign with its crown, betokening government, and demanding obedience; the pendant or pennon, with its long streaming tail, indicating the national vessel or man-of-war; and the union flag in sign of the triple kingdom, England, Scotland, and Ireland. But the *Sea Serpent*, that deaf adder, made believe not to hear the mute language of the banner, which summoned her to surrender in the Queen's name. She bore on—now distancing her pursuers, now being gained upon; now gliding and slipping away, anon likely to be captured. But she hung out no flag of truce or surrender, and Dangerfield congratulated himself on his crew. He had trained them well, and they were acting as he would have acted.

He had opened the window, and stood breathless, his glass glued to his eye. He forgot himself in his ship. He knew that if she were taken he was a ruined man, but

she had been to him friend and lover, and he longed to be sharing her fate, and joining in that exciting chase. But his longings were suddenly suppressed, for the *Invincible* had neared the slippery *Serpent*, and had opened fire upon her. She returned it. Flash, and flash, and flash went the guns, amid the wreathing smoke; and echoes of the unequal conflict reached the Captain in his observatory, and other watchers close at hand. It was a harrowing and exciting moment, especially to Dangerfield above and Mark below.

But it was sharp and short. The wily *Serpent* was taken at last, and her captain was cruelly conscious of it.

"Ruined, and by no fault of my own!" he groaned, with set teeth, and then he laughed. "They think they've got me too; but I'll run them a rig or so yet. Those cowardly dogs of Frenchmen did the busi-

ness. If only the crew had all been English!" he muttered, as he watched the last curl of smoke disappear from his battered ship, and her taken in tow.

With the certainty of her loss came the uncertainty of his position.

"The hounds will be on the scent of me," he thought; "that Firman will be on my trail; I must fly at once! Why doesn't Mark come to me? I'll be bound that sister of his will peach to the coastguard."

He withdrew from the window, and began to pace the room. The sound of his footsteps brought some one to his door. He was about to open it, when a paper was pushed underneath, containing the words, "Keep where you are. Be as quiet as you can. Nobody knows you are here but those of last night, and they are safe. Every soul in Beachton is out watching the S. S. You

must not show on peril of your life.—M. G."

Thus Dangerfield was a prisoner, albeit in friendly keeping; while his mates were in custody of Her Majesty's naval officers. It was no wonder that he stood with clenched fists, fighting the air, and muttering curses "not loud but deep."

CHAPTER XIV.

"HIS WIFE."

ALL Beachton was out. Yes, the chase and subsequent boarding of the *Sea Serpent* drew all its inhabitants either to the beach or rocks. On the beach stood scattered groups of fishermen, their wives and children, eagerly commenting. Job Tuck and his confidants were there, restless and angry; feeling conscious that they might be called upon to make common cause with the smuggler, and become involved in his misdemeanours. On The Bluffs stood Mr. Gay, Mark, Jerusha, their men, and such customers as were about the mill. There was

Levi at Mark's side, whispering infuriating fears of personal danger; while the unconscious miller was preaching short sermons in occasional sentences, such as—

"See what it is to break the law, my men; sure to come home to us sooner or later. The *Sea Serpent* a smuggler! Not so, Mark! surely not so!"

But Mark, the most interested of the animated gathering, was for once silent, and stood leaning against the wall of his house, underneath Dangerfield's window, surveying the fight through a telescope, while within the window, at his side, was Janey, who was keeping under cover at Jerusha's request.

As to Jerusha, who suspected much if she actually knew little, her attention was divided between the distant ships, Mark, and the end of a telescope, which she descried protruding from the window of the

room in which she knew the Captain of the suspected vessel had slept. Thanks to the old-fashioned stone window-frame, and the latticed window, Dangerfield was himself invisible. But Jerusha knew that it must be perilous to harbour him, who should have been at that moment in command of the ill-fated *Sea Serpent*. Broken sentences, eager comments, unseamanlike expressions, proceeded from all the spectators, except from the few personally interested, who were too excited inwardly for outward show, and, like the Captain, harboured thoughts of vengeance against the ministers of law.

Half-way up Mushroom Bank, right above The Bluffs, was a party of Preventive men, also standing to watch, and pointing and gesticulting; while down as far as Hollow Cove, Chivers and his mates were on the cliff or beach, equally observant and anxious. The inmates of the villa were made aware

of what was going on by the stir and hubbub on the beach; and Miss Martha and her farm-people were stayed in their labours by the unusual sight at sea.

During the time that it took to pursue and board the *Sea Serpent*, no one did a stroke of work at Beachton. The unequal contest was, however, not long. "The obstinate wold sinner of a *Serpent*," as Tilly expressed it, was fairly caught at last, in spite of its manifold coils, and taken in tow by the *Invincible*. Of the killed and wounded amongst her resolute, if deluded crew, or those of her captor, no spectator could tell.

The excitement of a labouring population soon subsides, and before noon Beachton was quiet, and at work again—all but its smugglers, who hovered here and there in restless agitation.

"You will not peach upon Dangerfield?"

whispered Mark to Jerusha, as the little crowds began to disperse. "Remember, he is our guest."

"Certainly not; he must be punished enough," replied Jerusha, glancing up at the window, whence the telescope was withdrawn. "But you will break with him, Mark. He is not to be trusted, and may involve you in his fate, if you don't take care."

Mark nodded. His careless and good-humoured face was stern, and his sister felt that he had been learning a practical lesson that he would never forget, whatever might betide.

"Help Janey to be silent. He must have food. He must remain till night," said Mark, still in a whisper, to Jerusha.

"I will see to that," she returned. "But let him go to-day, for, if he remain, he may bring us all into trouble. Listen to father,

and see how unsuspicious he is. Oh, Mark, don't deceive him."

"Now, my men, before we set to work again, take a word of advice," Mr. Gay was saying, coming close to his children as he spoke, and standing beneath Dangerfield's window—"never burn your fingers by poking them into unlawful fires. If that ship and crew—God help 'em—had been engaged in honest trade, they needn't 'a feared revenue cruisers. Pay the taxes like yon mill-wheel, who works hard for me because I keep her well in repair, and give her rest at night. Do your duty by the Queen and her ministers, and they'll do theirs by you, take my word for it. Be honest, and the laws will be honest."

"You be right, measter," muttered more than one of those whom Mark, or Dangerfield through him, had led astray. "I be a-gwain to stick to th' old mill."

When Mark had pushed the paper already mentioned under Dangerfield's door he went to work at the mill to avoid observation. He had as much as he could do to ward off the questions of Levi and his accomplices, for in them dread of consequences had begun to overpower lust of gain, and they were growing fearful for themselves.

"Neither you nor I have anything at all to do with it," was all he could reply.

Jerusha went to Janey, who was in a great fright, though understanding nothing. Mark's peremptory orders and angry speech the previous evening had intimidated her, and she was shy even to Jerusha. But that passed off when Jerusha, having first closed the door, tried to make her understand the situation of affairs, and to teach her caution experimentally.

"You see, dear," she said, gently, "the *Sea Serpent* is Captain Dangerfield's ship.

She seems to have been a smuggling vessel of late, and will now be Queen's property, having been captured by the coastguard."

"But Mark sailed in her," said alarmed Janey.

"That was some time ago, and he was only a sailor," continued Jerusha, herself doubtful on this head. "But as she is taken, her captain, who is in this house, is in danger of being taken too; and then Mark, father, and all of us might get into trouble for concealing him. Only Mark, you, and I know that he is here. We must keep the secret. Can you get rid of Mary till to-morrow, and help me to do the work?"

Mary was Janey's maid-of-all-work, and came from Muchsandy.

"I should like to send her with a little present to mother and the children," said Janey, hesitating. "Then she could see her

friends, who live close by, and bring us news from home."

"How clever you are getting, Janey! Quite sharp," said Jerusha, seizing the idea. "There is a cart in the yard going that way with flour, and she can have a lift, and be off at once. I will see to it."

Jerusha, who was always equal to the occasion, filled a basket from her own dairy and larder, while Janey, aroused to activity by the prospect of "sending home," bade her maid Mary prepare to take it. The girl was glad to go, and no time was lost. She was seated in the cart in less than an hour, enviously watched by Tilly, who was heard to exclaim, as she drove off,

"Oh, gollikins! there's Miary wi' a spic-an'-span new shawl, a-carryin' off all zworts from our dairy. She'll peck upon I now, if I doan't give Levi a hot zupper, which is more than her can do."

So there was consolation in store for Levi as well as Dangerfield, from the thrifty care of woman.

Rushy and Janey forgot, in part, their anxieties over boiling water and fried eggs and bacon. Nothing like the fumes of cookery to dispel the blues, and they penetrated even to the unlucky Dangerfield, and turned his thoughts from prison, upon which they were unconsciously wandering, to the possibility of food. Being very cold, and afraid to move, he had again thrown himself upon his bed, but not again to sleep. Hearing a tap at his door, he jumped up, and whispered cautiously, "Who's there? Come in and speak to me, for I'm confounded low."

"Your breakfast," replied Jerusha, from without, and he heard the welcome sound of a tray laid on the passage floor, and retreating footsteps.

"Miss Gay—Jerusha," he said, half opening the door. "Either speak to me, or send your brother. I shall go mad if I am left in this solitude. You will not betray me? You will not tell those land-lubbers. Won't you come in."

"No. My sister is with me," replied Jerusha shortly, for Janey had followed her.

He took the intended hint, and re-closed his door until he heard the light footsteps of the women on the stairs. Then he took his tray, and began his breakfast; but not with the air or appetite either of prisoner or madman, for he ate with evident enjoyment and forgot his danger in his good cheer.

When Mark came in Jerusha sent him to Dangerfield, bade Janey keep guard below, and went home to dinner. She found her father thoughtful and abstracted. He was distressed to find that a vessel in which his

son had made several voyages should have been seized, and could not understand it.

"Dangerfield must have been sharp to hoodwink Mark," he said to Jerusha. "I wish they had not sailed together. I'm afraid it may tell against Mark as well as the Captain."

Rushy felt almost criminal in conniving to hoodwink her father, when she strove to turn his thoughts to Janey. But he must not be implicated in Dangerfield's hiding, so she told him that Mary was gone home, and she had promised to be with Janey as much as possible, as she was still ailing and not equal to much work.

"By all means, my kind little lass," he said. "Thou deservest a good husband when thy time shall come."

This speech smote her with the recollection that she had not yet confided to him Firman's love for her. Indeed, events had

been so rapid since its declaration that she had not thought of it. And now she was engaged in secreting one for whom he would probably be on the search. But she would die rather than betray her brother's guest. Still, she could but remember that Firman had seen that same guest disappear round the point which led to his present hiding-place, and might come in search of him there.

After dinner she returned to Janey, and continued with her the remainder of the evening. To the general anxiety, Mr. Gay joined them at tea, and persisted in putting all sorts of questions to Mark concerning the *Sea Serpent* and its captain, to which Mark replied by ill-managed falsehoods, which were palpable to Jerusha, though not to her unsuspicious father. Of course Dangerfield was alone, and without food meanwhile. As to Janey, she was too frightened to speak, so his secret was safe for the present.

But about seven o'clock a message came to the effect that Lieutenant Firman wanted Mr. Gay. Jerusha's heart beat quick with many emotions, though she managed to decline her father's invitation to "come and see her 'fancy man,'" calmly, and she, Mark, and Janey were left together to aid their guest's escape.

"Now or never!" cried Mark. "Tell Dangerfield to be ready, while I go and see that the coast's clear. You had better put out the light, for that Firman has eyes all over his body."

Jerusha did so, and crept upstairs, followed by Janey, while Mark went to the door.

Dangerfield was again solacing himself by that result of his *good conscience*—sleep. He was soon aroused and ready, and while parleying with Jerusha through the door, Mark called from the bottom of the stairs—"Come! come quick!"

He had made his arrangements previously, and had found them, to all appearance, satisfactory, for he left the front-door ajar, and locked the back one, which communicated with the mill. He also closed the shutters, and looked cautiously through the basement, fearing where no fear was, as uneasy conscience does.

"After this, I wash my hands of him," he muttered, while Dangerfield's step sounded on the stairs. "It's hard that a fellow can't be let alone when he's married, and wants to be steady."

He was joined by the trio for whom he was waiting, and bade the Captain be quick, since all was ready, and if they missed the present chance, they might not get another; for there was no moon to tell the Beachton folk who they were, and the boat was waiting.

Dangerfield said, with an oath, that it

was "hard on a fellow to be so hounded for nothing," held out both hands to Jerusha, and told her he should never forget her courage and kindness.

She could see by the firelight that there was softness in his eyes, as she let him hold her hands a moment, while she said,

"Give up your wild ways, and let brother alone. We will all pray for you, and, wherever you may be, we shall be heard."

"Come along," said Mark, already in the passage.

Janey had stolen out after him, and had thrown her arms about him in a sort of trembling fear.

"You will be back soon, dear?" she whispered, clinging to him. "It is all night when you are away."

"In less than an hour, my darling," he replied, pressing her to his heart. "You have been a brave little wife to-day. You

believe in me still, and will always do so?"

"Of course, dear; you are my husband," she whispered, with true, if tearful confidence.

A few minutes later she and Jerusha were standing alone in the doorway, watching the space into which the two men had disappeared. It was a clear, cold, frosty, starlight night. There was no moon, yet it was not quite dark. The moanings of the sea beneath The Bluffs were the only sounds audible; the stars the only objects visible. All else was shadowy.

"Suppose he were not to come back! It was like a good-bye kiss," murmured superstitious Janey.

"Nonsense! Let us go in, dear," said Jerusha, taking the cold hand, and leading her back to the fireside. "Why, he gave me no kiss at all."

"He knows I like to have the last," said

Janey, a faint smile illuminating her shy eyes. "But then, you know, I am his wife —his wife."

She spoke as if in a dream.

"His wife!" repeated Jerusha, thinking involuntarily of Firman, who was, perhaps, at that moment speaking to her father of her. "Of course you are, dear Janey. So you must try to be brave as well as constant, and not yield to every passing fancy."

"But I fear Captain Dangerfield, dear," murmured Janey, taking Jerusha's hand, as they seated themselves side by side, before the fire. "I hope you don't care for him, Rushy, I mean as I—as I—used to care for Mark before—before we were married, you know." A faint flush stole to her white cheeks, as she glanced from the fire to Jerusha, then looked into the embers again.

"Certainly not, Janey. What put such silly thoughts into your head?" returned

Rushy, thankful to divert her mind from Mark.

"Because his bad face became good, dear, when he looked at you, and that seemed strange to me," replied Janey, relapsing to the old theme of Mark—ever Mark.

CHAPTER XV.

"SHE IS MINE! SHE IS MINE!"

MARK did not return home that night, and his wife and sister sat watching and waiting in vain. About nine o'clock Mr. Gay joined them. He had been expecting Jerusha home, and had detained Firman in the hope of giving them his blessing before he left.

The lieutenant had come, as Jerusha imagined, to speak of her, and had found his way unprepared. But a few words had sufficed to clear it, and it did not take Mr. Gay many to make the young man's footing secure. They had met half-way; and the

miller, in the joy of his heart at the prospect of an upright, honourable son-in-law, had gone to fetch Jerusha.

"She is shy, though she seems so unreserved," he had said, as he left Firman watching for her, and expecting to see her with her father.

Jerusha tried to excuse herself, but her father would not hear of her "mock modesty," as he called it. He scarcely noted Mark's absence, or Janey's abstraction, in his eagerness to carry off his daughter. But she said she could not leave Janey until Mark came in, which would be, Janey assured him, immediately.

"Then you will come at once, when he has returned," said the miller, significantly, for Janey was not apprized of the proposal.

Jerusha assented, and Mr. Gay rejoined the lover, who was anxiously awaiting him.

Ten o'clock, and still no Mark. But there were men's footsteps at the back-door soon afterwards, and Jerusha ran to look out. It seemed natural for her to be again watching for her wandering brother, and he had not, as yet, outstayed the old hours.

"Mark! I am so glad!" she said.

"Wrong again," whispered a voice that she was learning to love almost better than Mark's.

In another moment the starry night witnessed a mute embrace which a father's blessing sanctified.

That father was close at hand, and Jerusha, in the strange, happy confusion of the moment, forgot Mark and their anxieties, and led the way back to Janey, who, having already stayed up for him more than once, did not expect him so soon.

"We have no secrets from my pretty Janey," said Mr. Gay, whose eyes sparkled

with pleasure. "Another wedding," he whispered, as Firman entered the parlour. "Rushy is going to follow your example."

Janey started with affright, as she knew Mark disliked Firman, though for what reason she could not tell. However, she made him welcome, shyly, glancing with some womanly pride at her pretty little dining-room, for this was his first visit. He apologised for coming so late, but Mr. Gay explained the reason, while Jerusha's face grew crimson.

"I wished to give them my blessing at home, Janey, and Rushy would not come to receive it, so they must have it here. May God in heaven look down upon you and bless you, now and for evermore, my children!" said Mr. Gay, solemnly.

Firman was standing near Jerusha, and again he drew her towards him, there in the

firelight, and kissed her, with the words of Schubert's German mill-song on his lips, "She is mine! she is mine!"

"I wish Mark was here, that we might all ask the Lord's blessing together," said the miller, tears in his bright eyes. "Janey, may we join in prayer? We are all one family, and what blesses one blesses all."

Janey signed an assent; and they four knelt down—Firman and Jerusha side by side, and Janey stealing close to the miller. Oh, how she prayed that Mark might come in and find them so occupied!

Mr. Gay offered a devout petition for the blessing of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on the engagement to which he had given his consent; and then he prayed for Mark. By a transition for which he could not himself have accounted, he asked mercy for all who were in distress of "mind, body, or

estate," particularly for those whom they had seen in trouble that day. A sob from Janey broke the solemn words. They overcame her gentle, fearful spirit.

"No tears to-day, my pretty Janey," said Mr. Gay, as they rose from their knees, going straight to Jerusha, and embracing her. "Thee wilt be kind to my little maid, my lass o' the mill. There is none fairer or better in the country. She has been a good daughter; she will make a good wife. Thee wilt not forsake her?" he added, turning to Firman, and using that familiar *thee* he employed to his children.

"Never, so help me God!" was the solemn reply.

Jerusha, standing between her father and her lover, restrained her tears with difficulty. That prayer had brought back to her forcibly, together with the consciousness of her own happiness, the doubt concerning

Mark's connection with Dangerfield; so intimately are joys and sorrows intertwined in this uncertain life.

Poor Janey remained apart, longing for Mark.

When the little excitement had subsided, Mr. Gay again asked for that erratic son, and all that he could learn was that he had gone out soon after he had, himself, left The Bluffs, promising to return in an hour.

"And I am sure he meant to come back," said Janey, "for his last words to me were 'in less than an hour.'"

"Do you know where he went, Rushy?" asked the miller, pointedly, addressing his daughter, who replied, with truth, in the negative.

"I hope he hasn't gone to look after his old mates of the *Sea Serpent*," he continued. "Mark isn't one to neglect a friend in distress. The *Invincible* ran her down like a

fox-dog," he added, turning to Firman. "I felt sorry for her and her captain and crew."

"She has given the cruisers no end of trouble; and now I hear her captain was not on board," said Firman. "She was seen near Hollow Cove Point about the time that we—that I—saw Dangerfield go round Beachton Point. My men are now on the watch down below at Beachton, and will capture him if he comes that way."

Jerusha coloured so palpably, and Janey turned so pale at this information, that Firman's attention was attracted.

"I suppose you'll set a price upon Dangerfield's head?" said the miller. "'Tisn't worth much, I fear; but if he has been a smuggler all these years, I can't excuse him."

"We shall catch him if we can, but he's more slippery that his ship, and doesn't care

who pays, or who runs risks, if he escapes," replied Firman. "He would sacrifice his best friend, if he have one."

"Then what will become of Mark!" burst forth from Janey, unable longer to restrain her terror.

"Hush, hush!" cried Jerusha, rising, hastening to her, and whispering, "Remember the risk. Hush, Janey, hush!"

"I can't, Rushy, I can't!" sobbed Janey; "They will shoot him. Oh dear! oh dear! that wicked captain will be his ruin, and perhaps I shall never see him again."

Firman's suspicions had been long aroused; they were now confirmed. Mr. Gay understood nothing. Jerusha clasped her hands with an appealing glance at Firman, while Janey rose, and looked with terror from one to the other.

"What does my pretty Janey mean?" asked the miller, as she, trembling from

head to foot, ran to him, fell upon his neck, and entreated him to save Mark. "Where is he? What has he done?"

"They went away together. Mark will be shot in trying to save him. He will escape, and Mark will be killed!" cried Janey, quite beside herself.

Mr. Gay and Firman both looked to Jerusha for an explanation, and she, seeing that secresy was now useless, bethought her what best to say. She knew that Firman was her friend and lover, but she also knew that his duty made him Dangerfield's enemy.

"Mark is only doing what friendship and hospitality bade him, to say nothing of duty to his captain—for I suppose one owes duty to one's master, even if he be a smuggler," said Jerusha slowly, as if to gain time. "You would do the same, I am sure?"

looking at Firman. "Captain Dangerfield slept here last night."

"I suspected as much," interrupted Firman, taking Jerusha's hand, and pressing it re-assuringly. "Was he not here while the *Sea Serpent* was taken, and till about seven o'clock this evening?"

"Here! in this house!" ejaculated the miller, rising, and releasing himself from Janey in his excitement. "Impossible! I have been about all the day myself."

"Dear Mark did not know he was a smuggler," cried Janey. "We only hid him while he was in danger, and helped him to escape."

"And now you have betrayed him!" said Jerusha, angrily. "But, father, you would have done the same. He was our guest, and Mark has gone with him to assist him to escape, and is sure to be back soon."

"Dangerfield was here in hiding, and saw his ship taken, and her crew shot down like dogs, or smugglers, which is much the same!" exclaimed the miller. "And you all knew it, and never told me. That is not like you, Jerusha. Two secrets from your father in one day. Captain Dangerfield slept at the old dairy-house, and you never told me!"

"We could not bring you into trouble, father; the friendship and the risk were Mark's. I was drawn in accidentally, by coming to sit with Janey," said Jerusha.

"Will Mark be shot?" shrieked Janey, seizing Firman by the arm, and displaying an excitement that quiet, unimpressionable people sometimes show in times of dread. "Will he be hanged or murdered?"

"No, no," replied Firman, soothingly. "Even Dangerfield, if caught, would only be imprisoned or fined, or sent to sea in

Her Majesty's service. Your husband is, I hope, safe. He has but stuck to an old mate in time of need, and I hope every sailor would do that. I know I should."

A glance of grateful love from Jerusha rewarded Firman for this kind speech; but Janey was not satisfied. Beside herself with fears for Mark's personal safety, she fancied that he, too, was subject to imprisonment, or banishment from her. She gave way entirely, and the whole attention of the little party was soon engrossed by her. The miller's kind heart was so pained that he wanted to send for the doctor; but this Firman quietly negatived, saying that it was best to make as little fuss as possible.

"And I remember there is a certain clever doctor at Beachton," he added, with a smile at Jerusha.

"You will stay while I make up my medicines?" she asked in return, for she

felt that Firman should scarcely be mixed up with them under the circumstances. "I will not be long, and when I come back you had better leave us."

He assented, and she hastened home to her medicine cupboard, while Janey's hysterical crying continued. When Rushy returned with her dose, it was she who reminded her lover of his duty, by whispering to him that she had been told by Tilly that one of his men had been after him.

Tilly, who was a sailor's daughter, had given him, she said, a short answer, for "she warn't a-gwaine to lose time wi' thay gakeys, and as for thick lefnan, the sooner he wur gone the better."

"I know you will help us if you can," said Jerusha, as Firman prepared to take leave reluctantly.

"I will," he replied, his brow contract-

ing slightly at the possible complications.

"Not contrary to duty; do that, whatever the result," said the miller, grasping Firman's hand. "If my boy had been steadier to his mark he would never have been mixed up with Captain Dangerfield. And maybe I should have been steadier to mine, and not let him have his way; I have ever 'spared the rod' and, I fear, 'spoiled the child.'"

Mr. Gay followed Firman out of the house. Before leaving, the latter whispered to Jerusha that he would return, if possible, that night, and, perhaps, the uncertainty concerning Mark, and the brave front she had shown, drew him even more completely towards her, than the usual consummation of a proposal and acceptance could have done.

"You don't think my boy is in personal danger?" asked the miller, accompanying

Firman through his own premises to the road which led to Beachton.

"Not unless he has been mixed up with Dangerfield in this illicit trade. The Captain turns out to be a reckless fellow, who has been long a smuggler, and connected with the gang we are trying to root out, and nobody knows who may be connected with him."

"My boy engaged in practices contrary to law! He may be wild, sir, but not wicked," said Mr. Gay stiffly. "He has his heart in the right place, if he is given to wandering."

"He would probably see nothing but daring and bravery where we see lawless adventure, and Dangerfield reckless gain," rejoined Firman. "But you will go back to *our* Rushy. She should not be alone with that frightened, delicate child."

"Child, indeed!" repeated Mr. Gay, as Firman hurried down to Beachton, and he went back to his son's home. "I thought she would have steadied Mark, and she is but a sickly infant, after all. Oh, my son! my son! What has thy poor father done to let thee come to this?"

Jerusha had persuaded Janey to lie down on the sofa, and take her medicine. Here she at last sobbed herself into troubled sleep, and while the miller and his daughter sat through the long hours of the night, expecting him who did not come, and retracing, step by step, Mark's career, and the voyages he had made with Dangerfield, she still slumbered on uneasily. Although Mr. Gay had no suspicion of the truth, and Jerusha but little, they both acknowledged that the Captain had gained an undue ascendancy over Mark, and feared that he

had been at the bottom, not only of Solomon Hasluck's disgrace, but of Mark's unexplained absence on the wedding morning.

CHAPTER XVI.

FIRMAN AT THE CAVE.

WHEN Frank Firman parted with Mr. Gay, he could not fail to realise the difficulties of his position. He loved Jerusha, he respected her father, he pitied and liked Mark, in spite of his recklessness; yet he foresaw that duty would lead him to act counter to them all. He prayed earnestly to be guided to do justly by them and the Government he served, without bringing them to any extremity; and to be directed so that his knowledge of a secret not intended for his keeping might not be turned

against those innocent women who had unwillingly confided it to him.

When he joined his men on the beach, he learnt that they must have seen Dangerfield and Mark. They informed him that the only people who had descended the back road from the mill had been Mr. Gay and his son, and that when they reached the turning to Beachton, they had been observed to speak together, and then to cut off towards Sandport, across the downs, instead of proceeding to the hamlet. Now, as the miller and Dangerfield were about the same size, and equally tall and powerful-looking, the mistake was natural; and as the Preventive men were not apprised of Firman's suspicions, they had, of course, no call to molest the owners of the property near which they were stationed. It was, however, clearly Firman's duty to pursue Dangerfield, though he scarcely believed he should

either overtake or otherwise secure him. His thoughts turned at once to Seagull's Nest, which was midway between Beachton and Sandport, and was, he believed, as much a nest of smugglers as of gulls. It was more probable that the Captain would be concealed there until he could be conveyed away in one of the fisher-boats, than that he should proceed to Sandport, where he would be sure to be recognized, and where his *Sea Serpent* was already a disabled captive.

Firman therefore ordered some of his small force to accompany him across the cliffs and down to Seagull's Nest. Here, as well as on the Muchsandy side, heaps of white lime were placed at the dangerous parts, so that they managed to keep clear of the brink of the cliffs.

It was, as we have said, a cold, frosty, starlit night, and Firman's elastic tempera-

ment yielded to the bracing air, and crisp rime-covered sod, so that he walked on briskly and cheerfully, in spite of the scene he had left behind. Those words "She is mine! she is mine!" and the melody to which he had heard them sung—so aptly imitating the mill-wheel, and its flowing, tripping, rushing, musical waters—rang in his ears, and he forgot Dangerfield and Mark in Jerusha's bright, laughing, serious, tearful, April-day face. Oh, how he loved it!

They did not reach Seagull's Nest till long after midnight. He went first to Chivers's hut, and thence to the others, which were planted in a sort of ravine between the downs, and looked a very haven of repose to the wayfarers. There was neither sound nor light. All the inmates were apparently asleep, and Firman did not consider it a part of his duty to arouse them, without

proof of complicity. He therefore walked down the ravine. Two boats were hauled half-way up it, and placed under shelter of the rock on one side, but a third boat, which was usually there, had disappeared. The tide was nearly at full, and he stood a moment to watch it as it bounded up against this little natural landing-stage.

Old Father Frost, who had seized upon everything else with his icy clutches, had no power over his elder brother Ocean, and the waves advanced and receded in spite of him. Still they seemed quieter than usual, as if just stricken, though not subdued, by the chill tyrant.

While Firman remained watching it a few minutes, as he had done once before when Mark was rowed off from that spot, he heard the plash of oars. In another moment or so a shadowy boat, containing four ghostly figures, was visible at Hollow Cove

Point, and rounded it successfully before he could summon his men—rounded it in the direction of Sandport. He was well convinced that two of them were Mark and Dangerfield, and that they must have been in hiding somewhere in the Cove since they had left Beachton at seven o'clock. He could not help feeling relieved. He knew that he should be well rewarded if he got hold of Dangerfield, but he disliked the notion of *flesh-money*, as he called it, and he disliked still more having to capture Mark with his deceiver. However, there was now a case for arousing the inhabitants of Seagull's Nest.

He began with Chivers, who, much to his surprise and somewhat to his relief, was safe in bed. So were all the other fishermen who lived in that suspected spot. They were, however, soon alive to their danger, and ready, as Firman knew, with a

hundred lies if they needed them. The owner of the missing boat was so much distressed at its disappearance, and seemed so innocent of any complicity, that Firman and his men were completely foiled. However, there was no time to lose, so Firman despatched one of his men with the news to Sandport, and remained behind with the others.

"You had better walk in and rest, sir," said Chivers, aside to him. "There's no call for you to be on the watch till the tide's out at least. You won't disturb my wife, sir; she's better for your and Miss Rushy's kindness, and I've had a turn of work at the mill since."

Firman gave orders to his men to watch on the cliffs, and assented. There were still a few dying embers on the hearth, which Chivers kindled to a blaze with dry furze.

"Measter Gay lets us cut as much vuzz as we can carry, and knock down a rabbit on his land, and get his carn and vlour cheap, besides perquisites when we work for 'em," said Chivers, as if pursuing some thought. "If there be a good man, I say it's he."

"And as for Miss Rushy she be an angel!" said a voice from the large bedstead, in which slumbered three young Chivers, by the side of their awakened mother.

"Then you would scarcely harm Mr. Gay or his children," said Firman, cautiously, "since they appear general benefactors."

"No, sir; I'm vor to do 'em a good turn, whensoever I can. I wish I had the chance."

"Then I shall know to whom to apply, if I want help," said Firman. "You may

be able to prove your gratitude sooner than you think."

Chivers looked at him sharply. He was in a strait similar to the lieutenant, for he wished to obey Rushy's behest, yet dared not to declare against the smugglers. It was the honest miller on one side, the dishonest trade on the other; while with Firman it was love on one side, law on the other. However, the latter soon forgot both in sleep; and he was a brave man to venture to sleep in that suspicious haunt. But the settle in the chimney corner, and the blazing furze, together with much bodily fatigue, induced the repose he needed, and he slumbered peacefully till daylight, knowing that his men would arouse him if necessary.

When he awoke Chivers had disappeared. He felt stiff and cold from his awkward position and the frost, but he soon roused

up his limbs and senses, and went out. Snow had fallen during his stay in the hut, and he found the world wrapped in its fair Winter winding-sheet. The white garment lay lightly, however, and the sun was already glancing inquisitively upon it from behind the hills, when Firman walked down the ravine. He looked about in vain for his men, but observed marks of footsteps on the snow up the divergent paths to the cliffs.

"I wonder what has become of them?" he asked himself. "I was wrong to let sleep get the better of me, and so leave them to their own devices, or to the machinations of the cunning smuggler. To slumber over duty is to lend a helping hand to the enemy, and who knows but he may have seized it?"

Thus reproaching himself, he looked far and wide in the hope of seeing a human being, but the only creatures that were,

apparently, aroused that morning, were the industrious, unflagging sun and himself.

A sudden thought struck him. As the tide was going out, he would once more inspect the rocks about Hollow Cove. Snow lay upon stone, bramble, and lichen; icicles hung like sparkling gems from spray and rock, and as yet the greedy waves had not rumpled the white carpet cast over the beach; but here and there were signs that man had already soiled it, for there were broken foot-prints visible. Firman followed these, until he stood beneath the cave; the overhanging rock looking down upon him in primeval strength and size, like a giant on a pigmy, and showing a dark, rugged face, beneath its snowy glittering crown. He stood to wonder and admire; he scarcely knew which was oldest and grandest, the huge fortress of Nature or the ocean it for ever resisted. He bent his head in reverent

admiration of the stupendous power, wisdom, and grandeur of the Creator of all things, and silently breathed his morning prayer and praise in presence of ocean, rock, sun, frost, and snow.

But he was recalled to busy life even in that wild solitude. Nature has strange ways of bringing dark things to light. Footprints on the snow have before now mutely led to scenes of robbery or even murder, and they now pointed out to Firman the way to the long-concealed smugglers' cave. They could not be those of Dangerfield and Mark, for they had made their escape before the snow fell, happily for them; but there stood the half-hidden steps that led amidst the brushwood to the cave, revealed by footprints on each; footprints, apparently, of more than one person, who had pierced the brushwood by means of these rough steps.

"I have found it at last!" exclaimed Firman, aloud, with the enthusiasm of one who has suddenly dived into an arcanum long sought in vain.

Feeling that his pistols and cutlass, with which he was armed, were safe, he unhesitatingly planted his foot on the first step. It was so slippery that he wondered how anyone could have stood upon it with safety. Nevertheless, he scrambled up the rock, between the brushwood, now pricking his hand with thorns, anon benumbing them with icicles. But he reached the hole of the cave at last. He was not quite foolhardy enough to enter without endeavouring to reconnoitre, but looking in cautiously saw, by the light from the opening in front, a large cavern apparently full of smoke. There was neither sign nor sound of human being, though he listened keenly, holding on as well as he could by the slippery rock

and snow-feathered bramble. At last he fancied he heard a voice, and listening intently, made out the muttered words,

"I wish they'd coom. I be tired wi' zitten crumped up all by myself. An' Tilly her promised me tuoast an' yal. I wish I had never had nothen' to do wi' thay devils o' smugglers."

Hearing this, Firman crept on all fours into the cave, and penetrating its depths, pistol in hand, soon stood before a man who was crouching by a low fire, of which only smoke was visible. It was Levi Tuck.

"Here yo be, then, at last. I thought you'd never coom," exclaimed that worthy.

"Yes, in the Queen's name!" rejoined Firman, seizing him by the collar with one hand, and holding his pistol to his throat with the other. "Surrender quietly, for you can't help yourself; the coastguard have you at last, and you are in my power."

Levi was an arrant coward, and he had nothing to do but surrender. He did so with cries for mercy, and assurances of innocence. Firman did not know that he was one of the miller's men, but perceiving that he was a deluded countryman, spoke and acted accordingly. But if Levi was cowardly he was cunning, and not a word could Firman get out of him. Seeing that he was a dogged, obstinate fellow, he lost no time in useless talk, but made Levi precede him, while he surveyed the cave as accurately as the smoke would allow him.

"You med zo well let I go, vor there bean't nothen' to zee," growled Levi; but Firman perceived a variety of smuggled goods, which he did not, nevertheless, stop to examine, fearing the advent of Levi's accomplices.

"Come with me, my man, and turn Queen's evidence," said Firman. "We both

managed to get in, and we must contrive to get out. I am well armed."

Levi, seeing in imagination an army of Preventive men close at hand, offered no resistance, but followed Firman down the precipitous and dangerous path. They reached the bottom in safety, when Firman hallooed for his men. Although they did not appear, Levi trembled.

"Please to let I goo, zur. I bean't a smuggler—only a labouring man. I shall lose my day's work, and maybe my pliace," he muttered.

"You must accompany me to Sandport first," returned Firman. "If you tell the truth, and give the magistrates information concerning the smugglers, and, above all, Captain Dangerfield, I daresay you will be let off; but if you are obstinate, and deny what you have been doing, I am afraid you will be sent to gaol."

"I bean't a-gwan to uopen my mouth vor no magistrate, not zo much as a creek, zo you med zo well let me off. I be oone o' Measter Gay's men, and I knaws as he'll stan' up vor I; but I doan't want vor to trouble un, nor vor to let Miss Rushy nor Tilly vind out as I wur just warmin' myzelf in the cave. Thay wull all thank 'ee, zur, vor to let I goo back to my work."

Levi's unusually long speech was not without its effect on Firman, who was averse to proceeding to extremities, especially with anyone connected with the miller; still he could but do his duty, and poor Levi was marched off across the downs towards Sandport, to give an account of himself and his doings.

CHAPTER XVII.

SOLOMON AGAIN.

AS the day succeeded the wearisome night at the mill, confusion and anxiety increased with the hours. Mark did not return, and Levi was also discovered to be missing. Light began to shine painfully into Mr. Gay's hoodwinked eyes. He called his men together, and asked if any of them knew the reason of Levi's disappearance, but although one or two of his confidants suspected that it was connected with Mark's, they were not in the actual secret, for Levi had been the only one

employed to aid in Dangerfield's escape. Then Mr. Gay went down to Beachton to ask Job Tuck if he knew what had become of his brother, but Job was not at home, and his wife was unacquainted with his movements.

Jerusha had more than she could do to quiet Janey, who persisted in believing that Mark was shot by the Preventive men in trying to save Dangerfield. Her mind, never very strong, seemed turned by this idea, and Jerusha assured her in vain that if such an event had occurred they must have heard of it long before. Jerusha's fears were, however, increased by Firman's failure to return, according to his promise. Any promise was sacred to her, and she prayed that Firman, in whom she had a perfect womanly faith, might not be guilty of a breach of his. But she remembered he had said he would see them again, if possible,

and it might not have been possible, since so much was passing.

Rumours that there was something amiss at the mill reached Miss Martha, and she appeared in the course of the morning. Jerusha was with Janey, and would not leave The Bluffs, because, she said, Mark would come there first; so Miss Martha went there at Tilly's instigation. As to Tilly, she was nearly as much beside herself as Janey, for Levi was to her as "bright and particular a star" as Mark was to Janey. The romance of daily life is as strange, if less sentimental, in the peasant as the peer. Indeed, Tilly appeared to observant Jerusha to have even a greater weight on her mind than Janey; but then, to be sure, it was a stolider, stiffer mind to bear the weight, and less likely to break down under it.

"What's all this about?" exclaimed Miss Martha, as she entered the kitchen where

Jerusha and Janey were. "What are you doing there, Janey?"

"I am making a skimmer-cake for Mark, against he comes back. He is very fond of skimmer-cake," replied Janey, who was standing over the fire with a ladle, or skimmer, in her hand, and looking as if she were dreaming.

Jerusha had improvised this occupation for her, and occasionally glanced encouragingly into the boiler, where the flat cake reposed. But she oftener glanced anxiously at Janey, who was really but half awake in her dreamy doubtfulness concerning Mark.

"Mighty useful, Janey! But where *is* Mark?" asked Miss Martha. "I hear he has been absent all night."

Jerusha was about to reply by a half statement, when Mr. Gay came in, and answered the question by telling the whole truth. His manner was singularly quiet

and severe, and poor Janey let her ladle fall in terror.

"Too much secresy already. What is your opinion?" he said, glancing sharply at Miss Martha, as he ended his narration.

"I'm afraid Cap'en Dangerfield has led Mark into a bit of smuggling; and not so much harm after all," she replied, her conscience pricking her sharply.

"Not so much harm to break the law o' the land!" repeated Mr. Gay, deliberately. "If he has done it he shall pay for it, or *I* will, which is much the same. I've spoilt the lad, and we must suffer for it—both of us, the fault being mine."

Jerusha laid her hand on her father's shoulder, and Janey began to cry, hiding her face with her hand as she still stood aghast over the fire.

"Pack o' nonsense! Smuggling isn't what it was in my young days. Danger-

field's sharp enough, and sure to get off, and Mark with him. Now Janey, I'll have no more whining. Why, Mark hasn't committed murder, girl! What if he helped to bring you over your silk gown? He——"

"I shall never, never wear it again, Aunt," sobbed Janey. "I hope you will forgive me, but indeed I never can."

"Then I beg you'll return it to me, and I'll give it to somebody else. Now I'm sure that skimmer-cake is done, and you are to come with me. We'll go and look after Mark at Sandport, where Dandy and I are going instanter. Now, look sharp, and put your bonnet on, or he'll be there before us."

"Do you think Mark is at Sandport, Aunt?" asked Janey, brightening and moving from the fire.

"Where else should he be? Make haste, or we may miss him, and who knows where

he may be next? He's always as slippery as an eel."

Janey turned round with a bewildered look, but a gleam of hope shone in her eyes, while her natural obedience made her hesitate, lest Mark might object.

"Take her up-stairs, Rushy," continued Miss Martha. "Why, you all look as if you had been hanged, and let down from the gallows before life was gone."

Seeing that there was wisdom in Miss Martha's plan, Jerusha gently prevailed on Janey to accede to it, and while they were out of the room, Miss Martha said that she had always thought Janey half-witted, and now she was sure of it.

"I had my reasons for my opposition, Martin Gay, though you all thought me a spiteful old maid," she said. "But I'm not going to let Rushy bear the brunt of everything, so I shall try to keep her till Mark

comes back. She and Madam Firman will be birds of a feather."

"He may not come back at all," said Mr. Gay, gravely. "He may have gone with the Captain."

"Fiddledeedee! Bad pence are sure to turn up. All the same, Martin Gay, I'm uncommon fond of Mark. Why, here's Solomon Hasluck, as sure as I'm alive! He wasn't above a bit of smuggling, and he's uncommon pious."

As Miss Martha spoke Mr. Hasluck appeared, ushered in by Tilly. Rushy and Janey returned at the same moment, the latter comparatively brisk.

"Ah, Cousin Solomon!" she exclaimed. "Come into my drawing-room! This is only the kitchen."

"Not mad yet!" muttered Miss Martha. "Why, Solomon, you look more serious than usual, and that's not need-

ful. Have you lost another hundred?"

"These are serious times, Aunt Martha. How do you do, Cousin Martin? How do you do, Jerusha? How do you do, Jane? Where is Mark?"

"We shall bring him to answer for himself by the time you have said, 'How do you do, Mark.' Come along, Janey," said Miss Martha, and she was rewarded by an involuntary laugh from Rushy.

When they were gone Mr. Gay led the way to the mill, where he and Solomon had a private interview, at the request of the latter. As Mary had returned from Muchsandy, Jerusha had a little time for privacy also; the first breathing space she had enjoyed since her engagement with Firman. She upbraided herself because he was always uppermost in her thoughts, in spite of her anxiety about Mark.

It was a day she loved, and she walked

round by the mill-dam in the hope of ridding herself of the oppression she felt on her brain, caused by a sleepless night and trouble. Father Frost had laid his chains on the mantle of snow which still shrouded the earth; and Jerusha's little world lay white, sparkling, still, and cold beneath the sun and sky. She thought she had never seen anything so beautiful. The mill-wheel was silent, for a wonder, for the pond was frozen, and long icicles hung where the water usually dripped. The swans came out of their house to greet her, almost as white as the snow; and the only bit of colour in the crystal landscape was on her cheeks—rosy still, in spite of weariness. Her elastic spirits sprang up beneath the exhilarating touch of Nature, and she wondered, in her guileless youth, how man could sin when Nature was so fair.

"And the Great God, so holy and so

merciful," she thought, by a natural transition from Nature to her Creator. "He bids us enjoy the variety of the seasons—from the warmth of Summer to the bracing cold of dear old Winter; and yet ungrateful man rebels, and turns this fair world into a wilderness. If only there were no such people as Captain Dangerfield, how happy we should be!"

Very different thoughts occupied the miller and Mr. Hasluck within the snow-clad dwelling. They were sitting by the large hall fire, engaged in troubled if not angry discourse. Solomon had come to see Mark concerning his loans and interest, having heard of the capture of the *Sea Serpent;* and, hearing from Tilly that Mark had been absent all night, he had resolved to apprise Mr. Gay of his son's liabilities to him. He had done so in his usual precise and solemn manner, little imagining the

effect of his communication, since Mr. Gay had sat speechless and apparently indifferent while he made it. Solomon had taken out his voluminous pocket-book, which contained his bills and receipts, and was about to unfold them in confirmation of his statement, when the miller started up, laid his clenched fist on the table, and exclaimed with trembling, husky voice, emphasising each pronoun,

"*You* have encouraged my boy in smuggling practices! *You* have helped him to disobey the laws of God and man! *You* have lent him money to cheat his own father! *You*, Solomon Hasluck, who would be courting my only daughter! *You*——"

"Yes, and I am resolved to make Jerusha my wife at once," interrupted Solomon, speaking with his customary sententiousness. "Then let by-gones be by-gones, and we can arrange money matters in what it is my

intention to settle upon her. I have thought it all over."

Solomon, in his obtuse self-importance, did not see the indignant flash in the miller's eyes, or the satirical smile that moved his lips; and had he seen he would not have understood them. He sat upright, lank, tall, immovable, pocket-book in hand, while Mr. Gay walked across the room as if to stay his temper. Jerusha passed the window, and he beckoned her in. She understood his face at a glance.

"Be my witness, Rushy," he said, having recovered his usual voice and manner. "I will pay Solomon Hasluck to the uttermost farthing what he has against Mark—be it hundreds or thousands—if I have to sell the mill for it. Nobody shall say that Martin or Mark Gay owes any man a penny while there is a penny to pay it. But I little thought that the man to whom I would have

given my daughter in marriage, had she loved him, was no better than a Jew money-lender, who took advantage of reckless, thoughtless youth to get good interest for his savings. But that was my fault—mine. I indulged the lad, spared the rod, spoilt the child, and am like to be a second Eli. God forgive me! But, oh! may He spare his life, that we may both repent 'before we go hence and be no more seen.'"

"Oh, father! dear father!" exclaimed Rushy, clinging to him. "All will be well with Mark."

"Martin Gay, I am no Jew money-lender," said Solomon, offended, comprehending only what concerned himself. "I only took five per cent., a fair interest, which has been regularly paid till lately. And now, Jerusha, be my wife, and we'll say quits."

"Thank you, Cousin Solomon," replied Rushy, her sense of humour overcoming her

emotion, so that she could not resist making him a little curtsey.

"Mark said he thought you were coming round, my dear," returned the admiring but obtuse lover. "Cousin Martin, let's shake hands upon it."

The miller groaned, and Jerusha, recovering her gravity and dignity, surveyed him with surprise.

"Is this a time to think of 'marrying and giving in marriage,' when an only son is in peril of life and ruin?" asked Mr. Gay. "Rushy, speak for me."

"If Mark encouraged you to this belief, I am sorry," said Rushy. "He must have had his own reasons. I cannot marry you, Cousin Solomon, and father can tell you why. In the first place, I do not love you, and in the second——" She hesitated, and her colour rose.

"She is engaged to be married to an-

other, with my consent," supplied her father. "Now, Solomon Hasluck, add up your account, and let me settle it at once. You've paid pretty dearly already for dabbling with smugglers unbeknown to yourself; you shall be no loser by those you guessed at."

But Solomon's pocket-book and bills had dropped from his hand, and he was gazing on Jerusha, who was standing by her father. An ominous frown had overspread his face, and she was almost frightened at its stern anger. She had not believed him capable of so much feeling. She could not understand that when the desire of a life is snatched from a man, however selfish, stolid, phlegmatic he may have appeared hitherto, his soul is, as it were, roused to unnatural passion, and the individual self is replaced by a demon.

"Engaged—to—be—married—to—another!" repeated Solomon Hasluck, after a

pause, his eyes still fixed on Jerusha. "Is —that—true—Jerusha?"

"Yes. I am sorry to give you pain, Cousin Solomon," she answered, timidly, her warm heart relenting.

"Then he shall never have you!" he exclaimed, and, rising suddenly, he passed her by with a rough push, and left the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TILLY'S JEALOUS WATCHES.

WHEN Solomon disappeared Mr. Gay deliberately picked up the pocket-book and papers he had left behind, and placed them on the table.

"Bear witness that I do not open this book, Rushy," he said, sternly. "The bills, he told me, are what Mark and his seducer owe him, and I will examine them."

The miller spread the half-open papers on the table before him, while his daughter looked over his shoulder. They found that Mark and Dangerfield were debtors to

Solomon Hasluck for nearly a thousand pounds, interest not inclusive.

"He must have been blind, or mad, to lend it; still there is the Grange, and—and —the mill," said Mr. Gay, with a groan, while Jerusha put her arm round his neck, and stood over him almost protectingly.

He took up the papers, and went to his bureau, she following. Seating himself, he drew up a business-like account of the different loans, and wrote a cheque for the amount.

"Thee wouldst rather be out of debt than have a queen's dower, eh, my Rushy?" he asked, looking at her. "Thee will not mind parting with the dross."

"Certainly not, father; but are you not hasty?" she replied, natural prudence prevailing.

"Jealous again, my lass?" he said, with

a pained accent. "Mark is thy only brother."

"Oh, father, how can you suspect me?" she answered, smothering her prudential feelings in sorrow.

"I shall follow him, and have done with this. God preserve us from worse!" said Mr. Gay, carefully enclosing pocket-book, bills, and cheque in an envelope, placing them in his pocket, and hastening to his stable, to prepare his horse.

He was scarcely gone when Tilly brought her mistress a letter. The bold, clear direction made Rushy's heart beat. She felt sure it was Firman's, though she had never before seen his handwriting.

"Thick Preventer as brought 'un, Miss Rushy, tuold I as they've took oop Levi vor a smuggler," said Tilly, covering her face with her apron, and beginning to cry.

"Nonsense, Tilly; impossible! Just go

while I read my letter, and then come back again."

"Hem be a waiting vor a anser," said Tilly, sobbing, as she left the room.

Jerusha sat down at her father's bureau to read and reply to her first love-letter. She was, perhaps, a little disappointed because it was so brief and contained none of those declarations of undying affection which such letters are supposed to convey. She had a natural dislike to what is termed maudlin sentiment, but she had herself such a warm, loving heart that she had expected something different—longer, and more exuberant, in short. She did not allow herself to understand that it had evidently been written and despatched by purpose messenger in the hurry of important business. Still the dedication and conclusion were all she could desire.

She soon forgot them, however, in the

contents. Firman began, without circumlocution, by telling her that he believed her brother was safe on ship-board somewhere or other with Dangerfield, and that no alarm need be felt on his account. Then he said that his return the previous night had been prevented by unexpected work; and finally he informed her that one of her father's men was taken up on suspicion of smuggling. He begged her to tell her father this privately and cautiously, and to burn his letter. *Burn* her first love-letter! Poor Rushy! She obeyed, however; it must be confessed with some irritation, and stood to watch the sparks fly up the chimney.

"There goes the parson, there the clerk," she muttered, as the last two vanished, leaving only the burnt embers of her letter. "These will tell no tales," she added, rescuing the blackened remains, and care-

fully placing them between two leaves of white paper. "How foolish I am; but there is nothing to answer. I couldn't write that sort of letter to *him*, and I shall not attempt it."

Tilly was regaling the coastguardsman in the kitchen, when Rushy called her to say there was no answer, and when he was gone she came back. She was in great agitation, and her eyes were very red indeed.

"Do you know anything about Levi, Tilly?" asked Rushy, fixing her bright penetrating glance on Tilly. "If you do, it will be better for him and us to tell, for father can't help him in the dark."

"'Twor all done in the dark, Miss Rushy," sobbed Tilly. "I zeed 'um. 'Twor enough to make oone's blood bwoile, to hear thay wicked fellers."

"Saw and heard what?" asked Rushy.

"Levi midn't like vor I to mel wi' 't," replied Tilly, rubbing her eyes with her apron.

"Meddle with what? You must tell the truth. It is your duty!" cried Jerusha, impetuously.

Tilly believed implicitly in Jerusha. It was she who had taught her almost all that she knew. Of her young mistress she had learnt to read and write, and even to do a little in the way of cyphering. To her she had read her Bible and said her catechism and hymns, and it was from her Sunday-school class that she had been drafted to the mill. Most especially had Jerusha inculcated upon her the necessity of speaking the truth as in the sight of Almighty God, and although Tilly was not clever in book learning, she had got this lesson well by heart. Thus, when Jerusha adjured her, as above quoted, she stood a moment im-

movable, then burst forth into a revelation that terrified her auditor.

It appeared that Tilly had watched Levi's movements not only by day, but by night. She was jealous of him, for Levi was, in his way, fond of paying attention to other ladies besides herself, though anxious to be on good terms with her, partly because he really liked her best, and partly for the comfortable fire and good cheer she provided for him. No man, be he gentle or simple, is indifferent to these latter benefits, and had Levi been as devoted to Tilly as to her "beans and bacon or figgèd pudden" he would not have been watched. But Levi was human.

As it was, Tilly knew how he and Mark had often absented themselves from the mill at night, and how, when Mark was ill, Captain Dangerfield had got hold of Levi, and they had gone off together. She had

seen the smugglers about at night, and Levi with them, and was shrewd enough to understand that they were making a tool of him during the absence of Mark, whom he considered as his lawful master. She even knew that smuggled goods were concealed about the mill, and had heard him remonstrate concerning the receiving of them with Dangerfield's men.

"This mornin'," she sobbed, "I heerd somethin' drowed into the pond, as cracked the ice; and then I zeed vigurs about the big wheel. I wur watchen' vor Levi, an' hem wur took up by thicken dough-beaked Preventers. Deary me! deary me!"

"Why didn't you tell us all this before, Tilly?" asked Jerusha, with severity.

"I wur flummocksed, miss. An' you must promise I, Miss Rushy, not to tell as 'twer Tilly as tuold you, vor Levi wouldn't put up wi' I no more if he knowed. But

it bean't no more his vault than the onborn biabe's. 'Tis all thick capen's and the smugglers. Thay done it, and now do bliame it off to Levi."

Here Tilly fairly broke down, and Jerusha forgot her own difficulties in striving to comfort her. She had never seen her cry before, and had little idea of the depths of feeling that lay beneath that apparently unbroken surface. Tilly loved Levi as sincerely as she loved Frank Firman, and she had known him longer.

"Perhaps I have given my heart too soon," she thought, as she laid her hand kindly on Tilly's shoulder, and entreated her not to cry. "You will make me as bad as yourself, and then what will become of us? And if your eyes are red, Levi will guess something when he comes back," she said, encouragingly.

"Yes, I be a vool," said Tilly, turning

short round, and hurrying off to finish her cry on a three-legged stool over the kitchen fire.

While this scene was passing, Mr. Gay had saddled his best horse, and given some necessary orders, preparatory to following Solomon Hasluck. He came in to see Jerusha before he went. He found her standing where Tilly had left her, and looking sadly perplexed. She was endeavouring to decide whether or not she should tell her father of the disclosures made to her by Tilly. He anticipated what she felt she must say at all risks, by asking what the coastguardsman wanted whom he had seen enter the house at the back. She told him of Firman's letter and its contents, trembling for the result of her communication.

"Levi taken up for smuggling!" exclaimed he, sternly. "The plot thickens. Mark in hiding with his colleague; my man in league

with smugglers; my own cousin helping them on; and the fault mine—mine! for being a blind parent, unable to restrain a wandering son! I am justly punished."

"No, no, dear father. The fault lies at Captain Dangerfield's door," cried Jerusha, eagerly. "It is he, not Mark, who has led Levi astray; he, not you, who has been the cause of brother's wrong-doings, whatever they may be; and they are probably not so very wrong after all."

"If only I knew them all, and had something certain to work upon, I should be more content," said Mr. Gay. "It is evident from Solomon's bills that Mark is a smuggler. It must be known. It shall be known. His best chance of reformation is to be stopped in his career by his own misdeeds. I have helped him on long enough by over-indulgence; I will now give him a better lift by, maybe, over-severity. If

you have more to tell, Jerusha, and I see that you have, let me hear it, that I may no longer work in the dark. Our Father in heaven sees all, and punishes His children for their sins in His enduring light; let me do likewise, and bring my boy's deeds to judgment. Speak, my girl, if you have aught to tell, I command you."

The miller sat down in the bee-hive chair, and quietly awaited what his daughter had to say. He knew that she, at least, would not deceive him, for she had never in her life told him an untruth. Still he also knew that she had helped to harbour Dangerfield, and he feared lest she might suppress particulars that he ought to know, in order to shield Mark; and, therefore, he adjured her thus solemnly. He fixed on her a look so piercing, and his speech was so stern, that Jerusha was awed by his unusual severity. She knelt down by his side,

took his cold hand in hers, and said, timidly,

"Father, if we are all ruined, the fault is not Mark's, but Captain Dangerfield's."

"Better ruin than deceit. Whatever is hidden, must be known. Your harbouring him—though I should have done the same—has come to light. So must all besides. If not now, hereafter. Every dark deed will be made manifest at the judgment, and punished if unrepented of. If Mark has sinned against God and the laws, give him a chance of repentance here before that awful day, by making manifest what he unjustly conceals."

Jerusha, thus adjured, and trembling much, recounted, bit by bit, what Tilly had told her. As she proceeded, her father withdrew his hand from hers, covered his face, and leant back. He was forcibly restraining the groans that arose in his breast, as his son's dishonour became clear to him.

"And the lad knew of this!" he muttered.

"No, father, I am sure he did not," said Jerusha. "He was away when I heard sounds as of something cast into the mill-pond, and Levi pretended to be clearing the dairy-house. There is a strange mystery somewhere."

"It shall not be my fault if it is not cleared. I shall take counsel at once with Lieutenant Firman, and make all this known to him. No, I will not implicate Tilly. She has done no wrong. I don't believe they would dare to hide near here. But we will see into it with the sanction of the law. My horse is ready, and I will ride to Sandport at once. Maybe Solomon has gone that way, and I shall overtake him and settle with him—the mean-spirited——, but no. The Lord forgive me for being about to miscall my neighbour when my own son

is a greater misdoer! Have you a line or a message for—for your lover, my Rushy? He is honest and straightforward, at least, but you must make up your mind to lose him, my lass, if we are convicted of smuggling. Smuggling! A lieutenant in the coastguard would scarcely care to wed a smuggler's sister. God help thee, my darling!"

"Father! father! What do you mean?" cried Jerusha.

But the miller only hastened back to his stable, and mounted his horse. She ran after him to see him off, then, like poor Tilly, overcome by a sudden fear, she returned to her fireside, crouched down upon the hearth, and burst into tears.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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